DISCOVERING AND CONSTITUTING MEANINGS AND IDENTITIES MIDST LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

by

JOHN MARSHALL ARMSTRONG

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Department of *Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction*

The University of British Columbia
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ABSTRACT

How should we understand the lived experiences of students in an English language program at a community college?

This study seeks to explore and discuss the experiences of international students as they discover and constitute cultural identities in places between languages and cultures. It suggests a link between the vibrancy of these lived experiences and an English language education program which understands the value of the lived curriculum.

The text includes the narratives of three international students and the interpreting of those conversations by the researcher. Also participating in the study are the voices of teachers and the voices of writers of theory, with the researcher working in the middle, experiencing at the same time a discovering and constituting of his own cultural identity.

Building on the work of postcolonial scholars of cultural theory and anthropology, the study suggests a different kind of inter-national classroom and community, one which has implications for teachers as inter-national educators.

In doing so, the thesis attempts to respond to "calls for attention to international dimensions of curriculum study" (Pinar 1995) and suggests an approach to creating a different kind of theoretical and conceptual frame for language education. It is hoped that the research will open doors to new questions and avenues of study and will help in furthering our understanding of curriculum.

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introduction

Over the last thirteen years, our community college, located in the southern interior of British Columbia, has been inviting and encouraging international students to come to study. In doing so, we have been part of a provincial and national initiative in response to an international demand for post-secondary education and to the need for British Columbia and Canada to develop and renew international linkages. Our main goals have been to create a new international role for the college, encourage new international ties, develop a new source of college revenue, and internationalize our college and community. As head of the International Education Department and as an instructor in the English Language Program, I have been involved with much of the work in trying to achieve these goals.

We have been successful in achieving those goals, and the college community is a much different place today than it was thirteen years ago. However, we have also done more than we had planned. People at the college have made new friends, explored new ideas, learned new skills, enjoyed new interests, developed new perspectives, and begun to see themselves and their work differently. In bringing together people from different parts of the world, we have all taken a step in creating a new sense of ourselves and a new society in our college and community.

As I write this, I think of the many Canadian homestay families in our area who have hosted international students. I think of how many of those families have changed their view of the students, no longer seeing them as strangers or outsiders, people from other cultures, but as

members of their own families.

I think, too, of young Canadians who have met students from other cultures and who now have friends in different parts of the world. In some cases their lives have changed, as they have found a new focus for their studies, travelled to places previously unknown to visit their new friends, or succeeded in their work because of their new cross-cultural understandings.

Those of us who teach and work at the college have also changed. Since 1986 we have learned from the presence of international students in our classrooms, explored new dimensions in our curricula, made friends with other international educators, and, for some, become personally familiar with life in other parts of the world as we have travelled and taught internationally. We have gained a new understanding of what it means to work in inter-national education.

I write, though, of the students in our English Language Program, students who have come to us from places such as Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Mexico. These students have come to a new country to study, and have found themselves living and studying in a place in many ways much different than the home they left behind. They are the ones who find that in spending time in a new and different culture, they are not only learning a new language and acquiring new academic knowledge and skills, they are also learning new ways of looking at the world. In doing so, they are developing new perspectives, forming new identities. And as they do so, they are becoming members of an inter-national society that is different from the society they knew at home.

What is this experience like for them? What does this mean for them, the forming of new identities? What stories do they tell?

a changing global context

Working in international education offers the opportunity of working in change, both locally and globally. As parts and people of the world seem to move closer together, national cultures change, individuals change, languages change. The meaning of culture, the meaning of national, and the meaning of identity all are changing.

Watching the parade of Olympic athletes entering the stadium in Atlanta in 1996, I was struck by the team from France, led by a black woman carrying the *tricolore*, a team made up of both black and white athletes. They were followed closely by teams from Germany and Great Britain, where I could not see a single black face. We were watching three European colonial countries at the end of the century, yet apparently quite different in their national athletic cultures and identities, mixing in inter-national sports. What new cultures were forming in Atlanta then and in the World Cup stadiums in France last year? What new cultures will we see in Sydney in the first games of the new millennium?

The students who come to our college and those of us who teach them are also part of this change, as are the homestay families who host them, the Canadian students who become friends with them, and the townspeople who meet them in stores and on the ski hill. Our students go through the most

changes, of course, for they are the ones who have chosen to live in a different place, learn a different language, and immerse themselves in a different culture. And once old borders break down, once differences are felt, there can be no going back, the nature of the world changes, culture changes, identity changes.

crossings

My own experiences travelling, learning and using a new language, and living for a time in a new culture have taught me something about the spaces between languages and cultures, the spaces that one encounters when crossing from one culture to another, crossings both facilitated and obscured by language.

The term 'crossing' may imply quickness and ease, but I am writing of experiences that are neither quick nor easy, experiences that stay with you when you get to the other side. As a traveller in a new culture, I was full of wonder and fear, to name two feelings that stayed with me as I first experienced travelling and working in Japan. I remember the sense of accomplishment I felt at 'mastering' simple expressions and at being understood, at gaining in confidence and becoming more comfortable. I also remember the sense of strangeness, the sense of difference, the tension that came at different times with living in a different place, a different culture.

> *Crossing in the dark*
> *Cold winds and the inland sea*
> *Bringing down old leaves*

I wondered how our students must feel, experiencing living in this new culture and experiencing change.

listening more thoughtfully

What is this experience like for our students? What can we do as teachers to help them understand and express their experiences? How can we provide an English language program that acknowledges their experiences in the spaces between languages and cultures, a program that allows and encourages students to give voice to their own experiences? How could our program incorporate these experiences of students who are living in the midst of these crossings, in times of changes?

Ted Aoki has drawn our attention to the relationship between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, where the planned curriculum is that which is laid out in advance by curriculum planners and the lived curriculum is that which students and teachers experience and express as they live and work together in a classroom. He asks us to consider the place of the lived curriculum: "By listening more thoughtfully to sayings of teachers and students, (we can) become more alert to the archi-texture of curricular landscapes . . . ."[1]

If we can listen more thoughtfully to our students as they experience change, and if we can listen

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[1]Ted T. Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum: Towards a Curricular Landscape of Multiplicity," in *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 255.

too to our teachers, to each other, as we work with students, we can use these experiences to inform our program and shape our curriculum. Such an understanding of curriculum allows us to provide the openings for students to voice their lived experiences as they move into the spaces between languages and cultures.

students in the english language program

How are we to understand this English Language Program?

The college is located in the southern interior of British Columbia. It was the first community college to be established in British Columbia, in 1966, and serves students from the communities in the region. It is one of the smallest colleges in the province, with about one thousand five hundred students on the main campus, where the English Language Program is located. The campus is situated in natural surroundings at the confluence of two great rivers. We have deer and eagles around the campus, a pair of pheasants and a family of bears, and two cats.

The smallness of the community surprises many students. They were told it was small, but many students from cities like Tokyo or Hong Kong have no idea of what 'small' can mean.

> "Where's the downtown?" asked a student from Singapore. "Where are all the tall buildings?"

The students in the English Language Program come from Japan, Hong Kong, Germany, Mexico, Quebec, Taiwan, Korea, Brazil, and other places too. Most are international students. Some come for a semester or two to study English and learn about Canadian culture. Others come to enter college or university programs, and need to improve their English first. Some are Canadian students from Quebec who want to live in a different part of Canada and learn English. A few are people who have moved to the area and need to improve their English in order to have a better chance of finding a job. All of them speak at least two languages and know at least two cultures.

Most students are in their late teens or early twenties. Some are older, in their middle or late twenties or thirties. A few have been in their forties or fifties. There are a few more women than men in the program. Most come with an enthusiasm for learning which is obvious to us. They all have dreams. They all have experiences.

> "This is heaven!" said a student recently arrived from Hong Kong, swimming in a clear mountain lake on a hot summer's day.

They are: Samuel from Hong Kong, Karina from Mexico, Yumiko from Japan, Kiong from Malaysia, Lee from Korea, Patrick from Quebec, Felipe from Colombia, Rong from Norway, Sarah from China, Stephanie from Germany, Peyman from Iran, Leon from Macau, Hui-Chen from Taiwan, Christine from Switzerland, and Jose from Brazil.

The students come from many different places, they speak different first languages and they come from different cultures. They have different reasons for coming to the college, but together with

their teachers they form a community here, a vibrant, caring place of learning and teaching.

entering the english language program

When new students arrive, we greet them formally and informally, we tell them about the program, we tell them about ourselves, we welcome them and show them around the college, and we evaluate them. The instructors give them grammar tests, collect writing samples, measure their vocabulary, determine their reading ability, meet with them individually, interview them, and assess their listening and speaking skills. We talk to them about their interests and their previous experiences with English. We ask them about their goals. We give them our encouragement, attention, and support. We make opportunities for them to meet each other and to get to know our Canadian cultural assistants. Then we meet to place them in levels and courses.

I think we've become quite good at evaluating and placing students, though I sometimes wonder if we could not find better ways for them to enter the program. We have to look very closely at students' language abilities in all these different areas, so that we can place them 'correctly' in the program. This assessment is usually done at a time when the students are recovering from a long flight and are just becoming aware of their new environment in a different culture and time zone. Both teachers and students are under a lot of pressure. When we meet with the students individually, they respond very enthusiastically. However, during the testing, I have seen their sense of frustration grow as they struggle with unknown test instructions and difficult grammar constructions. They

answer some of the questions correctly. What does this do to them? What does it tell us and tell them about communicating in English? Is this the best way of getting students started in their new program, for which they have come so far and have brought so much with them?

The next day we tell the students where they have been placed in the program, and they fill out registration forms. Most appear contented with their placements, some are relieved, others ask to be moved, one or two sometimes cry. All are anxious to begin their classes.

studying in the english language program

The English Language Program has been divided into six different levels, with separate courses in different subjects. We organized it in this way several years ago, moving away from a program that had been structured only by levels and not by courses or subject areas. We did this to make it easier to address students' skills in different areas of language so that we could place them more appropriately and provide instruction at the correct level.

Students in the program take core courses in grammar, writing, reading, and communications. Within those courses they have options, such as academic writing and world literature. They also choose from a number of communication seminars, including volunteering, academic preparation, business communications and theatre. In addition, students can choose to take elective courses such as TOEFL or TOEIC preparation, computer skills, and Canadian nature studies. They can design

their own home page, study university level math, or write for the student newspaper. The program is designed to give students choices, the planned curriculum is a rich one.

During the day, the students move from room to room each hour, from teacher to teacher, with other college students. They have fifty-minute classes, with reading starting at 8:00, perhaps a break at 9:00, grammar at 10:00, and so on. Occasionally they have a two-hour class in one room with one teacher. Classes go on all day, sometimes with two-hour breaks between. The students are tired after 4:00, but we have to schedule some classes that late. The teachers are tired too. Interfacing a complex integrated program with a college timetable is rarely easy, and takes its toll on all of us in different ways. Students wonder why their classes have to be so late, why they can't go home earlier, why they have to wait between classes. Teachers put in long days too, arriving at the college early and getting home late.

Some rooms in the college have windows, but others do not. Light comes into the spaces as the students and teachers move through the hallways between classes.

Outside of the classroom, students can take part in a number of college and department activities. Some use the gym and the weight room, others play tennis. Some join the college's intramural soccer league. Everyone uses the cafeteria and most use the library. A few play the piano in the student lounge.

Students participate in class field trips and weekend activities such as horseback riding and golf

lessons. Some local Canadian students take part too, and sometimes so do the teachers. The curriculum outside the classroom offers many opportunities for students to mingle and make new friends.

Teachers work closely with students. Our offices and hallways are often filled with students, as they come to see us with homework, with questions about grammar, with questions about life in a new culture. The energy of the students comes back to us in many ways as we work with them in and out of the classroom.

"It's boring here, but good for study," said one student.

"I miss the college," said a student on the phone from Mexico.

"It was the best time in our lives!" said former students in Wanchai.

planning the curriculum

When the program was smaller and less complex, the planned curriculum was shared and understood by the teachers. As the program has grown in size, as the number of students and teachers has grown, and as the interests of these students and teachers have become more diverse, the program has lost some of its consistency. Some of the shared understanding has given way to different approaches, different backgrounds, different directions. As our community of teachers and students changes, a new understanding is emerging, but what that understanding is is not always clear to us.

For some courses we have a planned curriculum that is clearly laid out, with course binders, textbooks, and course outlines that we follow each semester. For others we don't. As teachers, we feel the need for some direction, for ourselves and for the students. At the same time, we have differing opinions about the nature and extent of that direction.

We agree that the students need to learn certain skills in each course and level. We have some agreement on the topics to include in different courses. We discuss activities appropriate for students in different levels. We determine outcomes for students. We try to decide on, define, and describe those skills, those topics, those activities, those outcomes, so that the program will provide a sequence and a structure for students, so that teachers will know what to include in courses and so that students won't miss anything. We are trying to re-define and re-describe our planned curriculum.

When we plan, we try to respond to the needs of students and the concerns of teachers. We take into account the comments of faculty members of other departments who may have our students in their classes later on. We talk with colleagues from other colleges and try to articulate our courses provincially. We buy books to fit our courses and subscribe to publishers' ideas of language skills and sequences, though we don't always agree on which books to order.

We have long meetings, trying to plan, trying to understand. We discuss ways we can approach the curriculum, we work in groups so that everyone can have a voice, but there are tensions in those conversations. Meanwhile we keep teaching.

thinking about curricula

As we work to improve our program, we are seeking routes we can follow. We can listen again to

Ted Aoki's words:

> By listening more thoughtfully to sayings of teachers and students, (we can) become more alert to the archi-texture of curricular landscapes within which activities like curriculum supervision, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and curriculum evaluation are said to take place.[2]

As a department head and a teacher, I have the opportunity to work in, and also have some

considerable responsibility for these activities of curriculum supervision, curriculum development,

curriculum implementation, and curriculum evaluation. And when I listen to our teachers and

students, I hear both the need for more planning and more structure in some areas and the need for

less planning and structure in others.

In order to provide instructors with a syllabus, to ensure that certain topics will be taught in each

course, and to ensure consistency of standards, our planned curriculum is becoming more 'complete'

in definition and description, and this is valuable work. The planned curriculum includes reading

skills, vocabulary development, 'understanding and use' of grammar, essay writing formats, oral

presentations, computer skills, and so on. There are quizzes, mid-terms, progress reports, final

exams, but possibly a lack of time for anything else. I think there is a danger that as we continue to

plan successfully, we will focus more attention on the needs of the planned curriculum and less on

the needs of the students.

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[2]Ibid.

"I have so much to cover," said one teacher.

"I'd like to give you more time to practise, but we have to finish this chapter and then do the quiz," said I.

"We want to have more conversation," said the students.

What is involved in language learning? A mere transmission of information and modelling of skills to be learned seems to run, if not against, then certainly separate from the currents of personal growth, where we can find both meaning and potential. It seems to me that meaningful language learning cannot take place if we do not consider the lived experiences of the students.

Students come to us every semester full of hope and enthusiasm about learning English and living in Canada. Within the department we arrange homestay for our students, we organize recreational activities for them, and we hire Canadian student cultural assistants to interact with them. We provide a language program that we think meets their needs, but I wonder if we give enough consideration to their own lives and their lived experiences, outside of their academic experiences. Does the structure of the English language program leave enough room for the lived curriculum?

In organizing the program the way we have, I am also concerned that we have created unnecessary borders between subjects that may hinder the growth of language learning, learning which does not see those borders. This compartmentalizing of learning and teaching, while ensuring that certain skills are taught and certain topics covered, has increased the pressure on teachers and students to do so, and the body of such work is not small. With a planned curriculum, there is, in each course,

pressure to finish the required work for that course. I wonder if we teachers and students might lose the breathing spaces, the places where that which is not written down in the curriculum as plan can come through, in other words, where the curriculum as lived can take root and flower, and the students and teachers with it.

Gaining a shared understanding of the worth of both the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum is critical, I think. And this understanding means seeking a balance and recognizing the tensions between the two. We need to make a place for the planned and at the same time ensure the unplanned. My goal as a department head is to try to make changes that allow the two to live in such a relationship of difference within our program. This route of difference is one we can follow, one that speaks to the places where our students live, in the spaces between cultures and languages.

listening to students

How are we as teachers to understand the lived experiences of our students? How can we ensure that we recognize and value their lived experiences? In our program we already employ a number of ways of listening to our students.

Most of our writing classes include time for students to write in their journals, though journal writing is not seen as the main component of these classes. Teachers read these journals, and gain valuable insights into student experiences. They are limited, though, to the students who write them

and the teachers who read them. Students in one of our advanced writing classes write and produce a newsletter twice a semester and other writing classes prepare anthologies of their work.

The practice of narrating, in written and spoken form, can provide a way of including personal experiences in a curriculum. Narrating can become part of a reading class, a listening and speaking class, a writing class, or a grammar class. It can allow students a way of entering into the curriculum, a way of making it their own. It allows teachers a way of recognizing the lived experience of students. It allows teachers to listen carefully to the voices of students.

We have for several years had advising times of one form or another. Sometimes a teacher will meet with a small group of students. At other times a teacher will meet with each of the students individually. These meetings provide us with information which we can use in assessing students' progress and well-being and which can help us in program planning.

Teachers often work closely with students out of class, developing a rapport through talking of class work and of the questions and concerns that students bring to a trusted teacher.

We arrange and promote social, cultural, and recreational activities for our students. We feel these activities will help students become comfortable living in Castlegar and encourage them to use and develop their English language skills by doing enjoyable and interesting activities with other students. When possible, we teachers try to participate as well, and in so doing, we enter a social world of students where they experience life outside the classroom.

In ways such as these, we lay the ground for reaching to where our students are, opening up lines of communications.

By 'listening' attentively in different ways we can open the door to bringing the lived experiences of students into the classroom, though we, as teachers in the program, must accept the necessity and worth of doing so, and then make spaces for that to happen. Part of this work is helping students see the value in their experiences and ideas, and those of other students. With some ESL students, we have to begin work from their understanding of what a class should be, where knowledge is transmitted by an all knowing teacher, and help them move towards understanding and valuing their own contributions and those of other students.

By listening to, recognizing, and legitimating the lived experiences of our students, we can make our program more meaningful while at the same time continuing to incorporate the very valuable parts of the curriculum as plan. This work is not to be underestimated, but the rewards make it worthwhile, as it is in this relationship, in the spaces between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived that new possibilities and new meanings will emerge. This, I think, would be a place that Ted Aoki has described as "a curricular landscape (of) a multiplicity of betweens." It is an exciting place, a place where "multiplicity grows as lines of movement,"[3] where " 'multiplicity is not a noun,' "[4] a place where we as teachers can work with students to bring their lived

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[3]Ibid., 260-1.

[4]Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), vii., in Aoki, Ibid., 259.

experiences to the classrooms.

reaching a thesis proposal

As a teacher working in inter-national education, I have thought often about our students, studying in a new land. I have wondered what I would want to study, and talk about, and write about, if I were in their place. My own travels in Asia and my experience teaching at a Japanese college have given me that opportunity of being, for short periods of time, a student in a different language and culture. My graduate studies have led me to explore those places where languages and cultures meet, as has the writing of my own experiences. If we knew more about our the experiences of our students, I thought, could we provide them with a more meaningful program?

Good teachers have encouraged me in this work. Their teaching and support have led me to think of the importance of self-confidence in learning, and what this would mean to someone undergoing a change in their idea of 'identity' as they learn a new language in a new culture. Ted Aoki's teaching has led me to re-think the idea of curriculum, and to "consider a re-location . . . midst the metonymy of both curriculum-as-plan and live(d) curricula – curricula as experienced by teachers and students."[5]

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[5]Ted T. Aoki, "Re-Constituting Pedagogy Midst Metonymic Curricular Spaces," (Handout for EDSE 501, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1998), 1.

A growing familiarity with critical theories of learning, of teaching, and of being has given me more of a philosophical and theoretical context for my thinking, and has nurtured my interest in exploring these places further. The work of writers in the border areas of cultural identity has entered into my studies of curriculum and helped to re-form my own identity as a teacher, department head, student, researcher, and writer.

These questions, influences, and ideas have led me to the work of this thesis: researching the lived meanings and identities students discover and constitute while experiencing life midst languages and cultures in this community college English language program.

Chapter 2
Re-Understanding the Research Question in a Theoretical Context

informing the study

The work of Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Ted Aoki, and others has led me to an interest in discussions of cultural identity and of places in-between, and particularly in how these discussions, these understandings can inform our study of curriculum.

Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, writes of "the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on the moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences."[1] As our students experience life in the English language program at Selkirk College, as they experience and articulate cultural differences, what are these moments, these processes?

Stuart Hall and Ted Aoki both write of a way of thinking about identities "as production, in the throes of being constituted as we live in places of difference,"[2] as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.' "[3] What identities are our students constituting as they live in such a place of difference?

Bhabha writes of " 'in-between spaces', " which "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of

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[1]Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1.

[2]Ted T. Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum," 259-60.

[3]Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in J. Rutherford, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Laurence and Wishart, 1990), 223.

collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."[4]

It is these 'in-between spaces' I wish to explore in this thesis, as our students learn a new language, explore a new culture, and "initiate new signs of identity . . . in the act of defining the idea of society itself"[5] as they experience life in the curricula of this English language program.

discovering identity/constituting identity

Ted Aoki has drawn attention to our tendency to see identities in a "noun-oriented, thing-oriented" way, as presences, "posited . . . in the landscape" and hence pre-existing, something we can locate and re-present. He suggests that a different way of thinking about this is to see identities, not as fixed presences, but rather "as production, in the throes of being constituted as we live in places of difference."[6] Aoki's observation introduces the questions of what identity is and how identity is produced, constituted, and re-constituted.

In a similar way, Stuart Hall writes of "two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity' " in terms of communities of people.[7]

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[4]Bhabha, Ibid., 1-2.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Aoki, Ibid., 259-60.

[7]Hall, Ibid.

The first of these Hall describes as the belief in an idea of "one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' " a cultural identity reflecting "the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide . . . 'one people' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning . . . ."[8] It is in this sense that people "discover, excavate, bring to light and express . . ." a sense of cultural identity which focuses on similarities, on a common, shared experience.[9] It appears though, that this commonality is only imaginary.

Hall's second way of thinking about identity recognizes that the production of cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being' " and it is here that we gain a different understanding of cultural identity. "Cultural identities . . . undergo constant transformation . . . and are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power."[10] It is from this position that the idea of difference is introduced, and the sense of cultural identity based on similarity alone becomes fragmented. Hall writes that "this second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are.' "[11]

If we take these ideas and apply them to our community of students, we can see that students who come from 'one' place, in terms of geography, culture, and language, and who are assumed to carry and maintain a certain cultural identity, an identity which we feel we can recognize and name,

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[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., 225.

[11]Ibid.

describe and respond to, are also forming new cultural identities as they live in this place of difference. This leads us to question the assumptions we may have had about their cultural identities and to recognize that these identities are changing. We should understand cultural identity, then, not as being fixed and immutable, but as being continually produced and re-produced.

cultural identity and curriculum

The words of Stuart Hall and Ted Aoki reflect the experiences of our students as they form new identities. We can imagine a process, a process of forming and re-forming identity, a process of which the lived experiences are very much a constitutive part. In the case of students studying and living in a new language and new culture, those lived experiences and processes are crucial, as the students form new identities in the spaces between languages and cultures. What does this mean for our students, to form new identities in the spaces between languages and cultures? What does this mean for us as teachers?

From an educational point of view, this means that in striving to develop and understand curriculum through looking at the lived experiences of students, we are not just looking for isolated lived experiences that represent pre-existing cultural identities that we can bring to the surface and include in our curriculum. We are looking instead for something else, for *processes* of constituting cultural identity in what must be for the students a vibrant time of change, so that we can use that

understanding in our curriculum, in that place of multiplicities that grow "as lines of movement."[12]

How can we try to understand, how can we approach this?

cultural identity and narrative

One possible approach is through narrative. Stuart Hall, like Ted Aoki, notes the importance of the

actions (both active and passive) of producing, re-telling, and constructing identity. Hall writes that

cultural identities "are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position

ourselves within, the narratives of the past,"[13] to which I think we could add 'the present, and the

future.'

Madan Sarup, in *Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World*, observes that "if you ask someone

about their identity, a story soon appears."[14] As the story is being told, identity is being constructed

and re-constructed, identity mixing with the life-story. The narratives of students, I feel, provide

a way of allowing us to share and try to understand their experiences as they re-produce their own

cultural identities. And the narratives of teachers too.

> *I thought today of the importance of parallel currents*
> *in my life and my identity. Riding my bike every night*

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[12]Aoki, Ibid., 260.

[13]Hall, Ibid., 225.

[14]Madan Sarup, *Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 15.

here in Vancouver takes me back to my time in Japan where I rode my bike to the college and around the town. It allows energy to shift from writing to doing Tai Chi to riding to reading, each giving some space for the others to grow. This brings me a sense of discovering and re-constituting of identity. In much the same way I feel my academic identity being re-constituted by new experiences studying with Ted Aoki in the Henry Angus building at U. B. C., through our course readings with my former political science professors Kal Holsti and Bhikhu Parekh, with whom I studied years ago in this same Henry Angus building, and in learning that Ted had studied with Henry Angus.

cultural identity, narrative, and discourse

In his discussion of the "two models of identity" that parallel Hall's descriptions, Sarup comments that neither the " 'traditional view' " of a "coherent, unified, fixed identity" nor "the more recent view . . . that identity is fabricated, constructed, in process . . . can fully explain what most people experience." He concludes that "identities, our own and others, are fragmented, full of contradictions and ambiguities."[15] It follows then that such stories will also be fragmented, contradictory, and ambiguous. Narratives of cultural identity, I would think, should reveal and express such ambiguities and contradictions.

Ted Aoki has drawn our attention to different ways of writing about our lived experiences that reflect these two views of cultural identity, as well as the ambiguity that Sarup refers to. Aoki describes these ways of writing about lived experiences as Discourse A, Discourse B, and Discourse

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[15]Ibid., 14.

C.[16] Stuart Hall's two views of cultural identity can be seen in terms of Ted Aoki's discussions of discourses.

Writing of the Caribbean black diaspora, Hall describes his first sense of " 'cultural identity' . . . (as) one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' "[17] which can be explored through looking at lived experiences and trying to recover, disclose, retrieve, and re-present essences, truths, and presence. One way of doing this is through narrating, which involves journalizing, storying, and theming. Here narrating involves retrieval of lived meaning, re-presenting a truth hidden away.[18] Aoki terms this Discourse A.

Aoki describes a second way of writing and re-writing in which language plays a more active, performing role. His Discourse B involves the producing, reproducing, creating, constituting and reconstituting of effects "in the midst of difference." In this producing and constituting of themes and the writing and rewriting of non-re-presentational texts, identity is being reconstituted within a tensionality of differences.[19] Here, then, is an approach to Hall's second way of thinking about

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[16]Aoki, "Live(d) Experiences" (Course Notes for Modern Languages Education 565, University of British Columbia, July 1996), 10.

[17]Hall, Ibid., 223.

[18]Aoki, "Journalizing as Writing/Re-Writing: Recovering and Constituting/Re-constituting Meanings of Lived Experiences" (Notes for a Workshop, Canadian International College, North Vancouver, B.C., April 1994), 6.

[19]Ibid.

cultural identity, "a matter of 'becoming' as well as being"[20] where narrative serves to both produce and express a forming and re-forming of identity.

Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha, Aoki describes a third space, a space of ambivalence, which I think touches on the contradictions and ambiguities described by Madan Sarup and helps us to understand what it means to live in the spaces between languages and cultures. The forming of new identities happens as people, and in this case, students, move between a 'position' of an assumed cultural identity (Hall's first view, where identity can be retrieved through narrative working in Aoki's Discourse A) and a 'process' of constituting and re-constituting a new cultural identity (Hall's second view, where identity can be produced through narrative working in Aoki's Discourse B). This is not a clearly defined or separated activity of course, so as their identities are changing, students find themselves in the spaces between, between identities, between languages, and between cultures.

It is in these spaces where students experience their own cultural identity as not merely in the sense of 'being' in one culture or the other, but in the sense of 'becoming' in both one culture and the other culture and in neither one nor the other.[21]

Lived experiences seen in this way Aoki terms Discourse C, a combining and not-combining of

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[20]Hall, Ibid., 225.

[21]Aoki, Class Conversation (Modern Languages Education 565, The University of British Columbia, July 1996).

Discourse A and Discourse B, which he describes as being "both a space of ambivalence, paradox, and ambiguity AND a space of generative possibilities and hope."[22]

metonymic spaces

Richard Appignanesi, summarizing Derrida, says that "texts are never simply unitary but include resources that run counter to their assumptions and/or their authors' intentions."[23] It would seem that narratives that are both retrieving and producing cultural identity in spaces of ambivalence would reflect this sense of difference, and that this assertion would support any exploration of Hall's two viewpoints of cultural identity. Therefore, any such writing would necessarily also reflect the ambivalence and possibilities which Aoki finds in Homi Bhabha's third space,[24] Discourse C. Aoki describes this kind of writing as a "metonymic space of metaphor/metonymy."[25]

Della Pollock provides a valuable description of metonymic writing which supports both Aoki's use of the term and its appropriateness in exploring cultural identity. Pollock writes that metonymic writing "is a self-consciously partial or incomplete rendering that takes its pulse from the *difference*

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[22]Aoki, "Live(d) Experiences," 10.

[23]Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Postmodernism for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1995), 80.

[24]Bhabha, Ibid., 38-9.

[25]Aoki, Ibid.

rather than the *identity* between the linguistic symbol and the thing it is meant to represent."[26] Pollock's reference to 'identity' here reflects the verticality of signifier and signified in Saussurean/Lacanian sign theory, where a deep meaning can be retrieved or recovered,[27] in the same way that Hall describes the 'discovering, excavating, bringing to light, and expressing' of a deeper sense of cultural identity.[28] Writings and conversations about cultural identity of this sort can be seen as occurring in Aoki's Discourse A.

Pollock's focus on 'difference,' however, places metonymic writing clearly within Discourses B and C, in places where identity is being constructed and in places of ambiguity. Here direct access to the signified is denied and meaning develops horizontally, "in the midst of signifiers."[29] Pollock notes how metonymic writing, "with its partial, opaque representations" is "not only not revealing truths, meanings, events, 'objects,' but often obscuring them in the very act of writing, securing their absence . . . ."[30] It is through this sort of writing that narratives of cultural identity can be explored. Discourse C provides a way of looking at cultural identity understood in this sense, and "the

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[26]Della Pollock, "Performing Writing", in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (eds.), *The Ends of Performance* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), 82-83.

[27]Aoki, "Constitutive Interplay Midst Discourses of East and West: Modernist & Postmodernist Renderings in Adult & Continuing Education" (Presentation for International Adult & Continuing Education Conference, Seoul, Korea, May 1996), 7.

[28]Hall, Ibid., 223.

[29]Aoki, Ibid.

[30]Pollock, Ibid.

language of 'constituting identity' takes place in these metonymic spaces."[31]

borders, spaces between, and hybridity

Homi Bhabha's notions of borders and boundaries, in-between spaces, and hybridity, as well as his understanding of postcolonialism have played a part in opening up spaces of thoughtfulness for me in working with these ideas of cultural identity and lived experience.

Quoting words of Martin Heidegger, Bhabha notes that " 'a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing.*' "[32]

Others too, have written about boundaries and border zones. James Clifford writes: "Cultural action, *the making and remaking of identities*, takes place in the contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, peoples, locales." (italics mine)[33]

I want to try to locate this study in that contact zone, in the place where students are "making and

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[31]Aoki, personal correspondence, March 1998.

[32]Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 152-3, in Bhabha, Ibid., 1.

[33]James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7.

remaking . . . identities." This implies a shift in position, from that of the educator, teacher, and researcher observing phenomena of lived experiences, to that of the students, educators, teachers, and researcher, interacting "along the . . . intercultural frontiers"[34] in the spaces between languages and cultures, a place from which something begins.

In a meaningful passage, Bhabha writes:

> The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating new strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.[35]

Homi Bhabha's words provide a different theoretical context for and also an affirmation of the ideas of cultural identity expressed by Stuart Hall and Ted Aoki. In looking at the positions of the subjects in this study, we need to "think beyond the narratives of originary and initial subjectivities" (in other words, the idea of a fixed, stable, pre-existing shared culture) and "focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (or, the constant transforming of identities in places of difference). We can look for these "new signs of identity" in "these 'in-between' spaces," the spaces in-between languages and cultures.[36]

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[34]Ibid.

[35]Bhabha, Ibid., 1-2.

[36]Ibid.

In Bhabha's writings, the "act of defining society" includes the process of hybridization, which for him is social, cultural, enunciative, and political, viewed and engaged in from a postcolonial perspective. The term 'hybridity' is often used to describe "the products and processes of fusion and intermingling" that have resulted from "the movements, flows, and interpenetrations of populations and cultural practices . . . ."[37] That understanding is useful too, but it is not Bhabha's meaning. He explains: "Hybridization is really about how you negotiate between texts or cultures or practices in a situation of power imbalances . . . . It's a social process. It's not about persons of diverse cultural tastes or fashions."[38]

With reference to T.S. Eliot, Bhabha outlines his notion of partial culture and the process of hybridization:

> This 'part' culture, this *partial culture*, is the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures – at once the impossibility of culture's containedness and the boundary between. It is indeed something like culture's 'in-between,' bafflingly both alike and different. . . . we introduce . . . the sense that the translation of cultures, whether assimilative or agonistic, is a complex act that generates borderline affects and identifications, 'peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash.'[39] The peculiarity of cultures' partial, even metonymic presence lies in articulating those social divisions and unequal developments that disturb the self-recognition of the national culture, its anointed horizons of territory and tradition. The discourse of minorities . . . proposes a social subject constituted through cultural

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[37]Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (eds.), *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 8.

[38]Bhabha, in "Staging the Politics of Difference: Homi Bhabha's Critical Literacy," in Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham (eds.), *Race, Rhetoric, and the Postcolonial* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 39.

[39]T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), 62, in Bhabha, "Culture's In-Between," in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 54.

hybridization . . . .[40]

Homi Bhabha's words and ideas draw our attention to the places where our students live, translating cultures and languages in the spaces between, and to the processes taking place there.

postcolonial migrations

While our students number only a few, they are part of an international phenomenon of studying abroad that will have an impact on our societies.

> For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees.[41]

The stories of students studying abroad, while less dramatic and certainly telling of a different kind of human migration than, say, the stories of the journey and arrival of the so-called 'Chinese boat people' on the west coast of Vancouver Island, which surely must provide something of that "grim prose of . . . refugees," still, are no less stories of "postcolonial migration" and "narratives of cultural . . . diaspora" with implications for this "demography of the new internationalism." [42]

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[40]Bhabha, Ibid.

[41]Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5.

[42]Ibid.

The lived experiences of the students "provide the terrain for elaborating new strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining society itself." [43] Their discovering and constituting cultural identities in the spaces between languages and cultures in the English Language Program at our college can be seen in this context of the defining of society.

Stuart Hall's words support this understanding.

> We need to situate the debates about identity within all those historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively 'settled' character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalization . . . and the processes of forced and 'free' migration which have become a global phenomenon of the so called 'post-colonial' world. [44]

We can look, then, at the stories of these students in the context of theory which locates itself in the stories of the borders, in the stories of migrations, and in the stories of the processes of the forming and re-forming of cultural identities, and from that position, a postcolonial one, we can look at the experiences of students, the nature of curriculum, and the nature of culture and society.

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[43] Ibid., 1-2.

[44] Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.) Ibid., 4.

Chapter 3
An Approach to Research

an understanding of research

Donald Polkinghorne comments on how our understanding of research has changed and how "the property of knowledge has been reconsidered." Statements of knowledge are not "held to have the property of a logical conclusion" but rather are understood "as an agreement reached by a community of scholars" as "the best map or description of reality . . . ." As Polkinghorne writes:

> No longer are knowledge statements considered to be mirrored reflections of reality as it is in itself; rather, they are human constructions of models or maps of reality.[1]

In this thesis, I have attempted to construct a partial mapping of the experiences of students as they discover and constitute cultural identities in this English language program.

Building on the work of Ted Aoki, I decided to try to listen more thoughtfully to the stories of students as they experienced life in the midst of languages and cultures. In doing so, I came to realize the meaning of "*narrating* as an interplay of *storying* and *theming*."[2] From this understanding, I began to see that the narrating of the students produced an interplay of their stories and theming which in turn interplayed with the interplay of the researcher's stories and theming. The presence of the researcher in the narratives, selecting, omitting, piecing together, marking absences, working between the voices of the students and his/her own, is critical to this kind of

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[1]Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Reporting Qualitative Research as Practice," in William G. Tierney and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Representation and the Text: Re-Framing the Narrative Voice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 7.

[2]Ted T. Aoki (ed.), *Teachers Narrating / Narratives Teaching: Pac Rim Experiences* (Victoria, British Columbia: Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education and Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Human Rights, National and International Education Branch, 1992), 1.

research. The researcher, along with the subjects, "becomes an actor in the text,"[3] telling a story. In this kind of research, the subjects speak, and the researcher speaks too, and the storying is informed by what they bring and by what they don't bring to the text. In such ways, different voices participate in the community formed by the researching. The voices of theory speak too, and the work of researching takes place between the narratives of students, and those of teachers as well, and the voices of texts. The researcher works in the middle.

in the midst of languages and cultures

My own interest in this research came as I began to work in this place in the middle. For a paper for one of my graduate courses, I decided to interview students about their experiences teaching and learning English in Japan.[4] One student spoke to me about her experiences living in the midst of languages and cultures in this way:

> I know myself my personality is sometimes so changed when I speak in English and I speak in Japanese.[5]

Several months later, while working on another paper, I thought again of Akiko's narrative as I was

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[3]Tierney and Lincoln, "Introduction: Explorations and Discoveries," in Tierney and Lincoln, Ibid., xi.

[4]John Armstrong, "An Exploration of Phenomenological Inquiry: Studying and Teaching English in Japan" (Paper, University of British Columbia, EDCI 572, December 1995).

[5]Conversation, December 1995.

reading a passage that Homi Bhabha had written about identity:

> Each time the encounter with identity occurs at the point at which something exceeds the frame of the image, it eludes the eye, evacuates the self as site of identity and autonomy and – most important – leaves a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance.[6]

These words seemed to me to speak to the experiences my student Akiko had related to me. I sat

listening again to her words on the tape:

> When I speak in English I encourage myself. I have much strong, strong personality, because of English, I have to say 'yes' or 'no', I have to decide which opinion.

Akiko realized a personal change was taking place, that a new identity was being formed, being

constituted:

> Sometimes when I speak Japanese my idea is so strong and explain some choice so direct way, I surprised sometimes, 'Oh no, it's Japanese!' so I don't say such strong way.

Was this not an 'encounter with identity' for Akiko? Was she not exceeding the frame of her image,

an image of her self which was Japanese, an image that was changing with the language of English?

In thinking again about this conversation, I was able to use Akiko's words to give meaning to

Bhabha's phrase, 'Interrogating Identity.' This seemed a " 'moment' of interrogation . . . in which

the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and

desire, culture and politics."[7] I felt that her realization that she had moved outside her old identity

came when she realized the differences in the languages, and the cultures. This new language

signified a cultural difference, a difference of which she became aware before moving back across

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[6]Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 49.

[7]Ibid.

the now weakened, and disappearing, boundary of the frame.

Akiko's narrative also helped me to give shape to Ted Aoki's discussions of discourses. Such an understanding of identity lies not only in the verticality of retrieval and recovery of 'the deep me' (Discourse A) but also in the horizontality of reconstituting and producing of self and identity (Discourse B), a place where the new signifiers of 'watashi-wa/I' no longer connected directly with her old concept of 'watashi-wa/I'. Akiko's narrative moved into Discourses B and C.

In this way we see identity as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being',[8] "not so much as some*thing* already present, but rather as production, in the throes of being constituted as we live in places of difference."[9] Here was movement in such a place. Here was someone moving in such a place.

Listening to and reflecting on Akiko's story and reading and reflecting on Homi Bhabha's words led me to a place of writing and theming, where I could work with Ted Aoki's ideas of discourses and Stuart Hall's ideas of cultural identity as I attempted to understand and interpret these stories and ideas. It is from that place that this thesis has grown and taken shape.

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[8]Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 225.

[9]Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum," 260.

generating questions

When we listen to Akiko's words, do we gain an understanding of what this process of discovering and constituting cultural identity means for her? Do we gain an understanding of her positioning between languages and cultures? What would the narratives of other students tell us about their own transforming cultural identities? Can we use these narratives in understanding and writing curriculum within an English language program? These are some of the questions that have been generated in and have guided the writing of this thesis.

spaces in-between

I am working with students and with texts, entering into those spaces created between languages and cultures, where meaningful experiences are both found and produced. Surely there is a tie to language learning, and an important opportunity for teaching and learning, in this vibrant time of constituting and reconstituting of selves.

In learning about and learning from these students, these texts, these spaces, I have considered the implications for the curriculum of our English language program, where we need to allow room for these experiences to be recognized, included, nourished, and shared. It is in this way, I think, that we can provide more spaces for those meaningful lived experiences to take place, for our students and ourselves as teachers.

a space for teachers

A study only of students and texts, however, highlights the absence of teachers. In studying language learning, language teaching must be considered, and really we are, in this field of education, students/teachers and teachers/students. In places in this thesis, therefore, I have made room for teachers to speak and to listen, and so this student/teacher will speak:

> *As a student teacher I had several difficult experiences which were almost enough to make me give up on the idea of teaching. I stayed with it though, and for my last practicum I asked for a small country school. And so I went to a rural community outside of Kamloops, where I met and learned from Eva Harvey, a teacher so attuned to her students, including me, that the experiences we shared in that classroom seemed seamless. It was a critical time for me, nearly twenty-five years ago, an experience that gave me a feeling for what it meant to become a teacher. Last fall I went to see Eva Harvey, and I found that she was still teaching grade six students in that school. That revisiting for me helped me to realize how valuable my experience there had been, in the producing of my identity as a teacher.*

researching

I have explored these spaces by meeting and talking with students enrolled in the English Language Program. I have also tried to read a variety of texts, and listen to a multiplicity of voices, including those of teachers. As I have done so, I have reflected on, interpreted, and written the parts of the stories I have heard.

I chose to focus on the experiences of students from Asian Pacific Rim cultures, as they make up the largest number of students in the program, and, I thought, would possibly experience greater cultural changes in their lives in coming to a small town in western Canada to study than students from Quebec, Mexico, or Europe.

I first outlined the research project in an open letter to students and teachers, and invited students who were interested to talk to me about the project. I aimed my invitation at students who were working at a high enough level of the program to express themselves in English and who appeared to be sensitive to cultural change.

During the period from October 1998 to July 1999, I met with six students. They were: Linka from Japan, June from Korea, Taro from Japan, Douglas from Hong Kong, Taeko from Japan, and Victoria from Taiwan.[10] There were two men – Taro and Douglas – and four women in this group of subjects.

I was able to do two interviews each with Linka, Taro, and Victoria. June left the college at the end of the fall semester before I was able to do a second interview with her, and my own college travel schedule made it impossible to do second interviews with Douglas and Taeko before they returned home at the end of the winter semester. As I found the second interviews to be very meaningful, allowing more opportunities for reflecting and theming for both the subjects and the researcher, I

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[10]These names are all pseudonyms. Linka, Taro, and Victoria chose their 'names,' while I selected the pseudonyms for the students who had left the college.

chose to use only the conversations with Linka, Taro, and Victoria for this research. My interpretations of those conversations form the basis of my research over the next three chapters of the thesis.

These three students were either nineteen or twenty years of age and each one lived with a Canadian homestay family. I knew them slightly, as students in the department, though not well, as I had never taught any of them.

Our conversations were held at the college, either late in the afternoon after classes or on Saturdays. We met in a classroom or an office, and the interviews lasted about an hour and a half each. The second interviews were held within two weeks of the first. The interviews were all individual ones, with just the student and myself present; I did not meet with the students as a group at any time.

I ensured that the procedures for interviewing subjects were followed according to the policies of the University of British Columbia. I explained the research to the students individually and asked for and received their permission to use their responses in my research. Copies of sample forms and letters of permission are attached in the Appendices. I also requested and received permission from my institution to interview these college students for this project.

I prepared some questions based on certain themes that I wanted to discuss, but I was really looking for opportunities to explore spaces of ambiguity and difference as they appeared in our conversations. I recorded the conversations and made some notes as we talked, and then wrote

transcripts as I listened to the tapes again. Listening to the conversations on tape again and again and writing the transcripts was time consuming, but in doing so I became very familiar with the students' stories. As I wrote, ideas came to me, and I began to focus on the parts of their stories that spoke to their experiences living between languages and cultures.

Over the two-year period before, during, and after the interviewing, I was also reading, reflecting, and writing. I worked with texts I knew and chose new ones that seemed to be located in this same kind of place, dealing with the same kinds of interests. Many of these chapters, articles, and books pointed me towards others, some that I had time to read and others that I couldn't. As I read, I made notes, and as I did so, relationships and connections formed, and new ideas emerged.

Along the way, I had conversations with teachers, colleagues in my department, and some of those conversations entered into the text too. I kept a journal, and soon had several files of transcripts, notes, ideas, and reflections. Some of these files were paper, some were electronic, and some were in my head. When I stopped working, these files, voices, and ideas would start to converse, and then I would start to think and write again.

In such ways, my own identity began to change, and I started to become a researcher.

my research question

"How should we understand the lived meanings and identities students discover and constitute while experiencing life midst languages and cultures in the curriculum of an English language program at a community college?"

Chapter 4
Interpreting a Conversation with Linka

Japan/Canada

A couple of years before she came to the college to study English, Linka had participated in a summer language program in Canada. "Staying in North Vancouver was a really good experience, not for language, but for staying in a foreign culture, everything different, really good for me, seventeen years old. Usually (students) in Japan rely on parents, hang around, same thing all the time. I just got out from that. It was amazing."

After Linka returned to Japan, she made up her mind to come back to Canada. "I decided to come back again as soon as possible. I had really good experience, so I decided not going to university (in Japan), (but) right after I graduated high school, to go to college or something in Canada."

She recognized the need to improve her language. "I really felt that my English skill's really bad because I couldn't talk with them at all. I just could say 'Yes, thank you' and 'No, thank you' and that's it. I felt really bad and I thought 'OK, I should come back here and talk to them in English really well.' Right after I went back to Japan I . . . went to conversation school again. I went there with my Mum, (she) helped me a lot."

When the time came for Linka to come back to Canada, she felt "excited and happy, because to go abroad and study English was really like my dream, really big dream. I was just excited and happy and I wasn't sad at all to leave. I didn't even worry about my English level, (I thought) in my mind, 'Don't be shy' and 'As much as I can, I will try.' "

trying

Linka began her studies at the college in the spring semester. During that first term, she and two other women from Japan decided to speak only English. "Some of my friends, many friends speak their first language when they meet together. . . . We decided not to speak Japanese so I think we improved a lot. It was great, really great. We just avoided Japanese."

"I think many people think if, when you go to a foreign country and stay there a long time you will be able to speak English really well, without effort, or without working hard, but it wasn't. I needed to try really hard . . . ."

here is not Japan

After spring semester classes ended, many students spent the summer going home or traveling with friends. Linka spent her whole summer vacation with her homestay family, communicating only in English. She went to the country with them and "saw really beautiful view, mountain and lakes, or river and nice sky . . . . The scenery were so totally different from my city so I felt like 'OK, I'm in Canada now' and recognize here is not Japan."

translating/not translating

· In the fall, the arrival of a Japanese roommate signaled a change. As the new student had very low English skills, Linka found that she had to translate conversations and was spending time using Japanese, when for the first few months at the college she had spoken only English. The student and the family both relied on Linka, and often asked her to translate. "I did, all the time, but I thought 'I'm not translator, I'm same student as her.' " She told her family and the other student "I don't want to translate any more, so please don't ask me."

In talking about this, Linka said, "Before she came I was doing really well, just only talking on the phone with my family in Japan (in Japanese), never . . . with my friends, so I felt she changed my life, so it's not good for me."

The situation allowed Linka to realize, however, that her English skills were, in comparison to the new student, quite good. "I can help someone . . . . I think I improved. I can talk, I can speak, I can understand English, I think, so maybe I should try more and be positive."

trying/afraid

In the fall Linka found new friends amongst the Québécois and Mexican students, and they started to speak English together: "I'm really good friends with Quebeckers."

In Japan, Linka had tried to speak out in her English classes, "even small voice, just only little things," and when she left Japan, she was determined not to be shy, but her own shyness and a cultural code that expects perfection have been factors in her language learning in Canada. "When (our teacher) asks us something in class, we are thinking, all Japanese are thinking in our minds, but the Quebeckers and Mexicans keep on talking, even though they make mistakes. We are looking for exactly the right word. I tried to say something but I couldn't because I was shy and I was afraid I would make a mistake."

saying no/saying thank you

Sometimes people compliment Linka on her English skills. "All the time when someone said 'Your English is good' I would say 'No, no, not at all,' but I don't say 'No' anymore." Her homestay family taught her a Canadian way of responding. "So now, 'Thank you, I'm really trying hard.' "

We talk about different cultures and Linka explains that she still says 'No' sometimes and explains her reasons. "When someone compliments you, you say 'No, no, no,' it's kind of a Japanese way, (but also) I'm not really satisfied with my English yet, so that maybe for them my English is good . . . , but for me not yet. That's why I say 'No.' " I ask if she would respond the same way in Japan. "For foreigners, I might say 'Oh, thanks.' For Japanese, I would say 'No.' "

language learning

I want to talk about the classes in our program, and I ask Linka what she thinks would help students. "Get used to English, just only listening or talking, even we can't understand, to be closer, to be familiar with English, this is helping a lot."

We talk a little about language classes. Linka told me about doing tests in school in Japan, where she "could get really high scores, like 98%, 100% I could get, but I didn't understand, like exactly why the grammar is going to, why we reduce vocabularies. Now I am doing that stuff here, with Tim (a college ESL instructor), now I figure it out, why, but at that moment I just couldn't understand why." What's the difference, I wonder. "I think the way to teach is different, because Tim's class, he's trying to progress, to tell us why things change. The teacher in Japan, she didn't teach any progress, 'just because.' She said 'Just remember.' "

I want to ask Linka more about her language learning. The English language program includes a variety of courses at several different levels and, as teachers and administrators, we are always trying to improve the program for students. I ask Linka what has really helped her in learning English.

"What has helped me a lot is, I think, my host brother because just we talk about everything, about guys, about girls, or whatever, about school, he's playing hockey, so about hockey, so talk and talk until three o'clock in the morning, four o'clock in the morning. He's nineteen, and I'm nineteen, so

we feel, I don't know about him, but I feel like really close. His friends are about my age, so meeting them, just because I don't talk, they are talking and talking, suddenly they pay attention to me, 'How do you say this word in Japanese?' and join them and talk and talk, it helps me a lot, really really a lot."

For Linka, however, this is a space of ambivalence.

"Still, I don't really like to go to the parties at friend's house or have a party at my house. Many strangers are coming and I don't have to talk, but if I join them, I feel lonely. I can't follow them, they are talking about the person who they know, but I don't know them, but just sitting there and listening it's really good, and sometimes asking me 'Where are you from? What is your name? What are you taking? What do you want to be?' and just answer and they say 'Your English is good' or something like that and I say 'Oh, no,' but sometimes 'Yes.' "

if I could just join

While Linka is often comfortable with her host brother and his friends, – "they are making jokes every time, just teasing me, laughing together" – she is still lonely sometimes. "I feel like I want to join them, I want to be friends, really good friends, but I just can't talk. I don't know why, I know because of shy, and still afraid of my language. Not now, but before, when I felt lonely, I felt like maybe they look down on me, or something like that, of course I'm not perfect because this is

not my first language, I'm still afraid. If they say 'What do you mean? I can't understand you,' it's really embarrassing. Or if I say 'Pardon me? What do you mean? What did you say?' and they try to say other way, I'm afraid they say 'Never mind, forget it' and they already give up to communicate with me, so I was afraid of that."

I ask if this had happened with her host brother's friends, and she said no, it hadn't. "It happened in North Vancouver, two years ago. That's why I am afraid."

"Sometimes (my host brother) went somewhere, some friend's house, or lake, or bar, and whenever he asked me, I said 'No, I'm tired, I'm sleepy' all the time. But now, all the time, 'Yes, I want to go." Why the change, I ask. "Roommate!" Linka replies. "She couldn't talk any English at all, but she always follow them. I was pretty impressed. Even I could talk, but I was afraid, but she all the time followed, so maybe I should, otherwise I felt maybe out of number, so just try, and things like that."

She can have a difficult time with groups of older people. "If I say something they pay attention, everyone pay attention. If I say something, 'Oh! Wow! She's talking, she's starting to talk'. (It's) like speaking the public, it's really hard to speak in the public, it's a really big gap. I feel so nervous, embarrassed. That's why I'm still shy, if I could just join naturally . . . ."

Linka gets to know some of the regular visitors to the home. She becomes less shy with them and finds things that they have in common, things that are different, things to talk about. She's happier

one on one. "I'm getting to know them and they remember me. Maybe before just only 'the student from Japan', but now 'She is Linka and she is taking the ESL course.' " What does this mean to her as her identity is forming and re-forming?

having fun/still afraid

Linka says that now she and her friends can laugh and make jokes in English. A friend in Japan wrote to her and asked, "Can you laugh speaking English? Are you guys laughing . . . in Canada?" "At that time I said 'Not really, it's different, what is funny, interesting for host family is maybe different for me'. But now, same time, we can laugh, having fun." She talks about her Quebecois friends. "What they are saying is really interesting, or what I am saying is interesting for them, (we) just laugh all the time."

Outside of class, Linka continues to gain confidence in different surroundings. Through the English program, she volunteers at a local coffee house. "I have a lot of fun and I really enjoy working up there and try to talk with customers. Before I couldn't, just went there and wait, but now I can say, "Hi, what can I get for you? What would you like?' all the time. Still I'm nervous, but just ten seconds, fifteen seconds, so it's fine. The people who work (there) are really nice, about my age."

I ask if there has been a change in her behavior in classes. Linka talks in classes sometimes, and feels students should show their teachers their level, but "even I feel like, teacher asks *'Who wants

to read?' maybe I should try, but I can't. Maybe I feel embarrassed still, still afraid. I feel like 'Oh, oh, afraid of mistake.' "

Has she started to think out loud and say things without waiting to find the perfect answer? "Depends on day, my feelings. If I'm sleepy, thinking in my mind. If I feel fine, talk a lot. Sometimes same as Japanese, sometimes same as Quebecker."

here is Canada

I ask Linka if she ever gets homesick. "Only once recently, I wasn't really homesick, but last week or the week before I was just thinking about Japan, all week, about my family, about my friends, what I did when I was in Japan, just thinking about Japan, Japanese things, about everything I was thinking. And I often dreamed I went back to Japan. So only one morning, when I woke up, I thought, like almost, 'Mum!', almost called my Mum, and, 'Oh no, here is Canada,' so, well, but, I wasn't really sad, but some friends said, 'What's wrong with you?' so maybe I didn't even feel myself I'm sad or homesick, but some people recognized. It was my first time since I came here, but anyway now I'm fine."

trying to understand

Stuart Hall writes of an understanding of cultural identity that "accepts that identities are never unified . . . , increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions."[1]

How should we as teachers view ESL students such as Linka, students whose cultural identities are and are becoming "multiply constructed," students who are moving into the spaces between languages and cultures? What does her story mean for our understanding of cultural identity? And how does it help us understand curriculum?

here is not Japan

Linka spent her whole summer with her homestay family. They travelled together, and she "saw really beautiful view, mountain and lakes, or river and nice sky . . . . I felt like 'OK, I'm in Canada now' and recognize here is not Japan." Linka talks a lot about Japan, her home and the only other country she has lived in.

Zygmunt Bauman writes:

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[1] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?", in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 4.

The opposition 'here I am but visiting, there is my home' stays clear-cut as before, but it is not easy to point out where the 'there' is.[2]

In reading Bauman's ideas about constituting and changing identity, I thought of our students. Linka knows that 'here is not Japan,' but what/where is Japan for Linka?

Discussing the impression that, to many, Japan seems "overwhelmingly homogeneous," David Suzuki and Kenbo Oiwa point out that "both the Japanese and others perceive the social cohesion that results from this uniformity to be Japan's strength. This notion of their homogeneity is, in fact, an illusion: there is a great deal of diversity within the country."[3]

Linka grew up in a mixed Korean-Japanese family in Japan. Her first language was Japanese, and she learned Korean in school. Her Korean father shakes hands when he meets people, her Japanese mother doesn't. When Linka was telling me about family gatherings at home in Japan, where everyone is laughing and talking together, I asked her what language they were using. She hesitated, "Japanese I think, yeah, Japanese." When we were talking about culture, she said, "I don't know whether this is Japanese or Korean, or maybe my culture is kind of mixed up."

When we as teachers first see our students in the English Language Program, or before we meet them, do we tend to put them in groups, and make generalizations about them based on their

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[2]Zygmunt Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity", in Hall and du Gay, Ibid., 30.

[3]David Suzuki and Keibo Oiwa, *The Japan We Never Knew: a Journey of Discovery* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1996), 160.

nationalities? It takes a while for us to begin to know them as individuals and learn their stories. Do we not make some assumptions about their 'identity' in the meantime? Do we not work from an idea we have of what 'Japanese' means?

Here is someone already working in a space between two cultures and two languages, a "kind of mixed up" place, a position which not only illustrates the fallacy of the idea of a homogenous Japanese culture, but more importantly allows us as educators to gain an understanding of the need to focus on the "hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences"[4] of our students.

How does Linka feel about this? "Actually someone asked me, 'Are you Japanese?' I say 'No.' 'You are Korean?' 'No, I can't speak (much) Korean. Korean-Japanese actually.' I'm satisfied."

Clearly Linka cannot be seen as 'Japanese' in the way which we may have thought of 'Japanese', but as something else, in a different place than 'Japanese', and this awareness of the cultural identity which she brings to our classrooms sharpens our attention when we work with all our students. As teachers, we must be attentive to the meanings we give to terms such as 'Japanese.'

In coming to Canada, Linka is taking another step in constituting her cultural identity, an identity, which, in Stuart Hall's words, must be understood as "more the product of the marking of difference . . . than . . . the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity . . . ."[5] Linka's position is becoming

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[4]James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 24.

[5]Hall, Ibid.

that of someone not only in a space between two cultures and languages, but in a space between the

between-ness of her Korean-Japanese identity and her new Korean-Japanese-'international student

in Canada' identity.

This is the world of hybridity, as described by Homi Bhabha and others.[6] Lawrence Grossberg

describes these "images of a *third space* . . . as . . . literally defining an 'in-between' place,"[7] a place

in-between the dominating cultures.

In an understanding of the constituting of cultural identity, we as teachers must remember that we

too are changing as our awareness of our students grows. It is "metonymic moments"[8] such as these

from Linka's story that must alert us to the shifting ideas of places where students work, and where

we work with them. With that understanding, so our understanding of curriculum changes too.

family and friends/just out of sight

Linka speaks often of the role of her family, or families. In her summer program in North

Vancouver, even though her language skills were very minimal, she developed a close relationship

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[6]Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 38-39.

[7]Lawrence Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies – Is That All There Is?", in Hall and du Gay, Ibid., 91.

[8]Ted T. Aoki, in conversation.

with her homestay family. The friendship with her family and new friends as well as the sense of personal freedom she felt at living in a different world gave her the motivation not only to return to Canada but to engage in a determined effort to improve her English so that she could communicate with people when she returned.

Back in Japan, Linka and her mother went to English classes together. Her mother inspired her and helped her during this time. "I went there with my Mum, I feel really close, also my Mum, at that time her English was better than me . . . . (She) wanted me to have many many opportunities to talk with English speakers . . . , Mum helped me a lot."

In our conversations about studying English at the college, Linka often mentions her relationships with her new Canadian family. She chose to spend the summer with them, they taught her new ways to respond in English, and she answered a question about what has helped her in language learning by telling me a story of her friendship with her host family brother. "What has helped me a lot is, I think, my host brother because just we talk about everything...." It is not the classroom experiences she talks about, it's her family and friends.

While the family provides a fruitful and supportive ground for Linka's language learning, it is not easy for her. Sometimes she feels lonely. I ask her about the loneliness. How does it feel for this language learner to be lonely? "I feel like 'Hello everybody! I'm here, do you know? Do you remember about me?' I feel like they are thinking I'm the same as air, just out of sight, I feel." What does it mean for a student to be in this space, to be 'just out of sight'?

"When my host brother's friends come over they always go downstairs and watching movie. Even I couldn't join there because maybe I can't understand the movie and I didn't try. I don't know why because I did in Japan, but here I didn't and I feel so stupid."

"That's why I should try, to join them, and I should talk with them. I'm just waiting for someone talking, someone speaking to me, I'm just waiting. That's why I feel lonely, I should try, I have to try, but still waiting." I ask her why she is still waiting. She laughs. "Because I'm chicken, I'm afraid, still."

meanings

What does Linka's story mean to me as a researcher? I think it shows this space of metonymy, of difference. Linka's story illustrates what it is to be a student midst languages and cultures. She is culturally shy. She's afraid of making mistakes. She wants to join in, but she can't do it naturally. She is lonely, she lacks enough language. It's a space of difference, of betweenness. Her story helps us to understand what it means to be between languages, to be between 'trying' and 'still afraid,' and to be between cultures – "sometimes same as Japanese, sometimes same as Quebecker."

Linka and I talk about how it feels for her to know three languages, in a way talking about what it means to her to be between. "Maybe it's good for me, I feel like being smart . . . , my view bigger and wider . . . . (When) host family, teacher, a friend, or whoever asks 'Where are you from?',

'Japan,' and 'What's your name?', 'Linka,' 'So are you Japanese, or what?', and I say 'I'm Japanese-Korean.' 'Do you speak Korean?' 'Yes' 'So you speak three languages!' They were so surprising. 'That's great! You are trilingual.' I thought, maybe it's great." I ask if she felt this way in Japan. "No, because speaking two languages is normal. We can talk in Japanese and in Korean. I felt it was natural then."

Linka's story has me, as an administrator of a language program and as a teacher, thinking a lot about our language program. In terms of our curriculum, what are we doing to give our students ways to speak with their host families and friends, ways to join in their conversations, conversations that are critical in their lives, conversations that could let them give voice to their experiences?

What are we doing to give students language strategies so that they can take advantage of this pool of opportunities that they are immersed in, that we promote as being a very favourable environment for language learners? What are we doing to help students like Linka, who are trying, and yet are still afraid, who live among new friends and supportive families, and yet are still lonely? How much are we involving and providing support to the homestay families, and learning from them? How can an understanding of Linka's lived experiences help us shape our curriculum so that we can offer our students meaningful language skills?

As an interviewer/administrator, I had anticipated that Linka would say more about her classes, about the English language program, but she told me stories of what was important in her life. I find myself re-thinking the emphasis we put on the curriculum as planned, trying to re-view the lives

of our students, seeing again the importance of the greater curriculum as lived, and wondering how

we can locate our language curriculum within these lived experiences.

Chapter 5
Interpreting a Conversation with Taro

better to learn here

Taro came to Canada after he had graduated from high school in Japan. Like other Japanese students, he had studied English in school. "All Japanese students must take English for at least three years . . . , so we are supposed to know at least grammar, but probably . . . because of Japanese educational system, most Japanese students don't know even grammar. Most normal Japanese high school students don't, can't speak English. They never teach how to speak or how to listen."

But his goal was beyond studying English. "If I study, then I'm good at English, but, you know, so what? Just to be able to speak, that's almost nothing, you know. We need some knowledge such as mathematics or economics to get a job, mostly to get a job in future."

Going to university in Japan was not something Taro considered for long. He felt it would be "difficult to get in . . . , getting out very easy, play with friends for four years, get out, by the time I graduated I would have gained almost nothing."

"I'd like to work for a trading company, like internationally. Of course English will be necessary, inevitable for me to communicate with any other people. (To study) economics in Japan, it would be useful, but much better to learn here so that I can compare my country with Canada or many other countries."

In thinking about studying abroad and reaching his goals, Taro was "sometimes . . . really nervous.

I would often think 'Will I ever be able to speak English, like you?' but I thought I just must have to make effort to be able to speak English. That's why I came here, and took the ESL program here."

surprised

His knowledge of Canada was limited. "I heard there were lots of mountains, I completely ignored it, I didn't believe it, I couldn't believe it." When he got to Vancouver, he "was quite shocked. Lots of mountains, everything seemed huge, a bit bigger than Japan. It was really weird, at the huge international airport, from there, I could see mountains all over, a city beside mountains, I have never experienced such a situation. Arriving in our much smaller community in the mountains, Taro said, "I was surprised a lot."

disappointed

In his first spring semester, Taro was disappointed. There were more Japanese students at the college than he had expected, and he found that some of them didn't share his approach to language learning. "At the beginning of spring semester I was really mad at Japanese students here. Some of the Japanese students, they were always speaking in Japanese, they were always together too, that's nothing."

"Also, actually I was really disappointed with the courses here, like reading or grammar, some parts of them are really useful, but most of them were not."

we didn't know how to talk

"A lot of students were complaining about the (communications) curriculum, in the class. Because they said, in their opinion, they have got not enough skills, not enough English skills to speak in class, so they really wanted the teacher to teach how to speak, how to communicate with Canadian people, but all (the teacher) did was just give us topic and then talk about it. Of course, we didn't know how to talk, so I thought, that's life."

"Lucy, from Mexico, spoke a lot in class in communications. Lots of Japanese students really can't speak English well, so they were complaining. I thought the curriculum itself was not so bad."

In one of his communications classes, the students did several projects. Taro researched and then did a presentation on the music of Brian Adams. "Yeah, the curriculum itself is really, you know, enjoyable for me, but not really useful." I ask about this, as he had chosen a subject that seemed to be interesting to him.

"Personally, it's kind of useful because I wanted to know about Brian Adams. Yeah, I did look up some unknown words which I'm now using, but the significant of communication class is to enable

students to communicate, right? logically? But just what we did is just from ourselves, not from teacher. As I told you, I really enjoyed it, but the communication class, it's, you know, not really good."

I ask him if there isn't a connection between the classroom work and the outside world. "Yeah, but still, I don't want to say like this, but I don't think of any other way so I will say, like, yes, but actually I was forced to do that, like in class as a project, so it's just the topic was music and I didn't know much about Brian Adams, so this, coincidence, made me think about that project. The best part, I could say, I got some information in communication class about Brian Adams."

"Actually I wanted to study about how to give the presentation, so actually I wanted the teacher to teach us exactly how to . . . , 'Do like this, and then you will be OK.' "

While Taro enjoyed the music project and some of the others like it, he found they didn't seem to have much connection to his life. "Talking about TV commercial and radio talk show, I've never done it even in Japanese, right, when I was in Japan no connection with something like that so I thought it's kind of silly, you know, just like conversation class or something."

"In conversation class I really think it's OK to just have some conversation, like in every day English conversation, but it's fun. But to have fun, that's kind of out of the college, or something? Actually I believe the significant of conversation class is talking, uh, to teach students that talking in English is really interesting, so it's OK, fine to have such kind of stuff, but in communication

class?"

"Actually I'm not quite sure about the definition of communication class here. I mean we are here to study English, so I think at first we need to improve our English speaking skills in communication class, then go to conversation class, have some fun, but first we have to make the basis, right? So, yeah, some of Japanese students are also saying (in) communication class 'they should teach us how to communicate, not how to have fun in English.' That kind of topics, radio, talk shows, I really enjoyed it, but talking of communication as a class, it's not exactly communication."

writing

Taro did find the writing courses very valuable. "I didn't even know what topic sentence was, so I asked (my teacher), 'Hey, what's topic sentence?' It's so logical, it's so fascinating, I found it very important, much better, because if I said traveling by bicycle is a really good experience and then . . . . But if someone disagrees with me, Japanese people think that someone disagrees with ourselves, not only what I wrote, but also what I am. It's not. (My) writing class made me, let me, notice that."

trying

Sometimes Taro seemed to share the feelings of other students from Japan, while at other times he disagreed with them. "I really hated the Japanese students . . . . They are always complaining about the college, 'because of the college system, my English hasn't improved.' For me, if I was going to this college, then (after) just studying at this college for a while, then I would be able to speak English, that's great, great college!"

"So I thought, 'That's their fault.' I suggested they try to speak English out of the college, but they didn't. All they did was just talking about Japanese things, in Japanese, all the time. That's their business, I thought, so I didn't really want to listen to Japanese students complaining, so (I said) 'Why don't you try to speak in English?' "

Taro does try to speak English in his classes. "At the college I'm really trying to speak, speak up, I'm actually kind of shy, especially, you know, English isn't my first language, I cannot say really what I want to say. Somehow Japanese students (think) that I'm kind of good at speaking, or good at English overall. I don't think so, for you know, whenever I'm speaking to Japanese students I'm kind of tense. What would they do if I made a mistake or something?"

He talks about a time in class when he didn't have the right answer. "I knew, I had looked it up before but, you know, I wasn't quite sure, something like that, but, yeah, I really wanted to say to my teacher, 'Hey, I did know that,' I mean, 'I knew that, but I don't know right now.' I'm

embarrassed, you know, kind of in my mind. I know teacher doesn't care, the rest of the students don't care, but I care sometimes."

"Hey, look at Linka, she never be afraid, she's never afraid of speaking, talking, she doesn't care if she's embarrassed, that's why, you know, she's progressed a lot, as you can see."

a different person

Taro has progressed a lot too. While he was nervous about using English at first, now he is more comfortable. "Now, I'm taking mathematics in English, so I feel now I could study, now I have a kind of confidence in speaking English, more than before. So English has become normal for me in everyday life."

I ask Taro if he remembers when he first felt this. "Yes, exactly! After my travel. I went to Banff and Vancouver by bicycle, last summer . . . . (Since then) my English has really improved."

I ask Taro to tell me about his trip. "I used to bike 100 kilometers a day. Of course I was camping, sometimes I was staying at hostels, so I had to look for the place to sleep, every day. To be able to do that I must speak English, at least once a day, just 'Can I stay here?' but that's enough. Every camping place, or at the hostels, it was extremely easy for me to make friends with Canadians or even people from all over the world traveling, now I got a friend in London, Australia, Germany,

all over the world. Just pitch my tent, then 'Hi, blah blah blah.' "

At times communicating was difficult. In Banff, Taro met a guy from Montreal, and through him some other people from England. They went to the bar one night. "I was the only person who didn't speak English, we were five – three guys, two girls. (Everyone) except me, got on really (well) together. I was just sitting. At that time I was really vexed, but, you know, I promised myself to be able to speak English some day."

He found he could use his English to help other travellers. "I used some Japanese, you know. All of the Japanese people I met during my travels could not speak English. I helped them communicate with the hostel owner. I'm not proud, but I'm really glad to be a help for them."

"Most of the time I was alone, biking, so whenever I saw people I really want to talk to them. Probably that's why. Actually I was I was kind of shy, afraid of speaking English. Probably I got over it through my travel."

"I knew almost nothing about bicycling. I have gained, got a lot during my travels. My host mum was really surprised when I went back home, (after) 35 days. So after my travels, my host mum said, 'You're a different person!' "

Japan/Canada

We talk of some of the cultural differences Taro has experienced in Canada. "I was really surprised, people here are so friendly, very friendly. When I was taking a walk, by myself, . . . every single person said to me, 'Hi, Hello' even though we knew nothing about each other. It never happens in Japan." "Do you say hello to people you meet now?" I ask. "Yeah, of course, otherwise I would be misunderstood that I was an impolite person. That's what I really like here."

Taro came to Canada with an expectation of some of the cultural differences he would find. "A high school student who I really respect . . . gave me some advice, one of which is, you know, it's being said a lot, one of the proverbs, 'Do . . . Roman does' you know, 'when . . . in Rome. . . .' "

Still, with his homestay family, he found himself a little confused at first. "At beginning, when we arrived, I was introduced, 'Come on in.' I came in and didn't take off shoes." His host mother explained that, in their house, they took off their shoes when they came in. "We usually take off shoes in Japan, but in Canada, I didn't know. All I read was about America."

We talk about the ways people make decisions. "I think Japanese people are so careful, for example, I'm talking with my friend, talking about what to do from now on. I've got a sort of idea and then so has my friend, but we never say at first. It takes time. Finally, 'Why don't you go to the bar tonight?' "

"(Japanese people) don't exactly say 'yes' or 'no' because we are afraid of hurting people, by saying 'yes' or 'no'. I really hate that part of Japanese, because sometimes it's really important to say 'yes' or 'no' immediately, if you've got certain idea. You don't have to care about hurting people. Actually you are not going to hurt anyone, because, for example, you said 'yes' to my question and then, it doesn't matter the answer is 'yes' or 'no,' still you are you, you are yourself. Your answer might be wrong, but you are not wrong. If you said 'no' and I expected 'yes' I wouldn't hate you because of that, just I disagree with your answer, but still I like you, the relationship doesn't go down."

His friend told him to be more definite, "not to say that kind of blurred expression. 'If you say 'yes' or 'no,' be honest to you, your mind.' "

I ask Taro about times when he has tried to follow his friend's advice. "For example, when I was asked by my host mum to take a walk, I was not in the mood, because I wanted to sleep because of my jet lag, but, you know, I must get along with them, so I was kind of hesitating. I should say 'Yes,' or I should say 'No thank you, right now,' but if I say 'no,' she would misunderstand me. Actually my host mum has had a lot of students so far, and . . . so she just said to me, 'If you are not in that mood, that's OK. I wouldn't think you are impolite, so please make up your decision, 'yes' or 'no.' ' I was really embarrassed because I was going to act like that, I mean 'yes' or 'no', black and white, but at the beginning she said (this) to me, right? So ever since I've been trying to say 'yes' or 'no' clearly."

At other times too Taro has found himself between languages and cultures. He had gone home to Japan at Christmas for a holiday. I asked him if he noticed anything different in the way he related to Japan and Japanese culture. "When I was taking a walk, one old man passed me with his dog. I said 'Hi' or Japanese, '*Konban wa.*' He was, like . . . (very surprised)." On another occasion, "I was at my station, I was late, I had to phone my girlfriend. One man (was) talking on the phone, and I had to reach across him to get the second phone. What I said to him, was 'Excuse me' in English. He was, like . . . ."

Taro's feelings about Japan have changed since he has been in Canada, "Before, I really hate Japan, 'I'll never come back here!' Since I came here, (Japanese) technology is nice, tradition, healthy, Japanese tourists are polite, I can see lots of Japanese products, I'm really proud of my country, some part of personality too . . . ."

Japan/Mexico

Taro shared his homestay with a student from Mexico. At first, they quarreled. "He thought Mexico was best. I'm from Japan, I don't think any other country is better than the others, so I told him." They eventually became friends. " 'OK, let's go to the bar, play pool.' It became our routine, go off to the bar. We had to speak English. He was really, really friendly. He spoke to (people), in English, I could see that his English improves a lot, (his) speaking was excellent. I felt obligated to speak. I don't want anyone to catch up to me. Mexican students, they are really friendly, no exceptions, I

really like Mexican people." This friendship led to others, and the time he spent with the Mexican students proved to be influential.

between languages and cultures

I ask Taro how if his personality has changed since he came to the college. "For me, people who (I am) communicating with (are) really more (important) than where to live, where I live. By communicating with students here from Mexico, or Quebec, or Korea, the personality might have changed, but still, if now I am with my friends in Japan, like before, I become like before."

"With Mexican people, somehow I could be more friendlier, outgoing, because they are like that so I become like them, then you know, they taught a lot of things to me . . . , they are thinking, at first, enjoy your life, then family come second, and then work to get enough money to live on. Still for me, at first family or to get a job, and then . . . enjoy my life . . . , still . . . my personality didn't change, but yeah, sometimes there is another way of thinking about life, so yeah, even just only when I'm with them, I become like that."

Does this mean his values have changed? "No, because I believe I trust myself, what I think is exactly correct for myself, so, you know, I cannot change my way of looking at my future, but still, you know, that way is also obtained because my friends . . . , so it could be changed, but for now I am living for almost twenty years . . . . That's why I am here, to study English, so from now on, my

personality will not be changed, really."

I asked Taro, "How do you locate yourself now, in terms of culture and language? Where are you?"

"Actually I asked myself exactly the same question, cause I went back to Japan for vacation last winter, but it was seventeen days, it was like a dream, and then before I went back to Japan, I was thinking (about going) back to Japan, having party with my friends, being with my girlfriend, like that, but once I went back to Japan just for, even just for seventeen days, I kind of missed my days in Castlegar. Now I'm in Castlegar and then, you know, I'm really excited about going back to Japan again, so one day I asked myself 'Hey, where I should be?' and then finally the answer is, right now, I don't have to decide, you know, and then in four years . . . , I will have finished my study, in Vancouver, after that, get a job, and then, start to think about it. So right now, here I'm Japanese studying in Canada, so right now I'm not really thinking about what I am. What I am is Taro, that's it."

thinking about these conversations

These conversations with Taro clearly show him to be in a place between languages and cultures. As a high school student in Japan he was very independent; he lived on his own and had two part-time jobs. As a language student in Canada, he is also independent, distancing himself from many of the other Japanese students at the college and embarking on a five-week bicycle trip by himself.

At the same time, he shares some of the feelings of the other Japanese students about his classes. He tries to adopt the ways of Canadian culture and gains an appreciation of his own. He recognizes that he is learning other ways of thinking about life, and accepting that he is who he is.

His language skills have improved, though he questions the value of some of his classes. It was on his bike trip and in his relationships with his friends from Mexico that he gained a confidence and a sense of motivation that allow English to "become normal . . . in everyday life." What could we do to make the classes more meaningful for students like Taro? What could we do to learn from his experiences? What do his stories tell us about the curriculum of our program, and specifically the communications curriculum?

thinking about communicating

Taro's comments about the communications courses led me to recall some of the discussions we have had in our department concerning the communications curriculum. The students are not the only ones who have been disappointed with the courses; our teachers have also questioned our curriculum, and felt the need for a different understanding. For the past year we have been reviewing the communications curriculum and re-thinking the needs of students. In doing so, we have been concerned with providing a sense of structure, a frame or plan that appears to be lacking now, without losing the value of the lived curriculum where students and teachers can explore and discuss ideas and meanings.

We can compare our communications curriculum as it is to a tangle of different kinds of vines, a healthy and fertile patch with lots of growth, but one where things are sometimes mixed up, where the direction of any one vine is difficult to trace, where it is difficult to discern one plant from another, and where it is impossible to get a perspective of the whole. In providing this 'lattice frame,' we are giving the vines a place to grow, along with some structure and training. At the same time, and critically, the lattice provides spaces for new shoots to grow, both within and beyond the frame, and allows for patterns of growth that are in response to the surrounding environment. Our curriculum will gain the benefits of a structure – the planned curriculum – but not lose the freedom for instructors and students to choose their own ways to give meaning to the ways we communicate in and out of the classroom – the lived curriculum. The space where we work with students is actually between the two. [1]

bringing with them

Teachers of Japanese students will be very familiar with the apparent reluctance of many students to participate in communications and conversation classes. Comments such as "students rarely initiate discussion . . . (and) . . . similarly, they seldom volunteer answers," [2] "they do not even take the initiative to tell their English teacher if they do not understand his or her classroom directions," [3] and " 'Why don't they talk more?' " [4] are representative of teachers' comments about their

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[1] John Armstrong, "Notes on the English Language Program Communications Curriculum," March 2, 1999.

[2] Fred Anderson, "The Enigma of the College Classroom," in Paul Wadden (ed.), *A Handbook for Teaching English at Japanese Colleges and Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102.

[3] Kyoko Norma Nozaki, "The Japanese Student and the Foreign Teacher," in Wadden, Ibid., 29.

[4] Anderson, Ibid., 101.

experiences with language students in Japanese classrooms.

A common explanation focuses on differences in cultures and communications:

> The difference between Japanese and western conceptions of a good student, and the difference in conversation styles between speakers of Japanese and speakers of English, also figure in the cultural contrast between Japan and the West. Japanese tend to think quiet, passive, and obedient youths who perform well on tests are good students. Westerners, on the other hand, admire those who challenge teachers with original opinions.[5]

While this is an obvious oversimplification based on cultural stereotypes – as we have seen, the idea of 'Japanese' and 'Japanese culture' is a fragmented one, as is the idea of 'Westerners' – it is still a valuable example. It serves to illustrate a common cultural and educational assumption that is sometimes made with reference to teaching students in Japan and is then sometimes transferred to North America, without the understanding that those students are changing. It does point us in the right direction, though we need to go further.

Fred Anderson, a language teacher, scholar, and writer working in Japan, has pointed out that "Classroom dynamics do not exist in a vacuum, but reflect the kinds of interaction prevalent in adult society, as well as the processes through which children are socialized into that society." Among these kinds of interactions are what Anderson describes as "four key characteristics of Japanese communicative style which differ from those prevalent in the West and are related to classroom behavior: group-mindedness, consensual decision-making, formalized speechmaking, and listener

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[5]Nozaki, Ibid., 28.

responsibility." [6]

Our 'Japanese' students are those who have chosen to study abroad, and, finding themselves in a new situation, are in some ways both Japanese and Western, and in some ways neither. Still, the students who come to us from Japan for language learning are products of that society, and we should assume then that they may, to some extent, exhibit the 'key characteristics' that Anderson has described. And if we are to try to understand and improve our curriculum, we need to look a bit at where our students are coming from, as long as we recognize that they are no longer there, and instead are engaged in an inter-cultural journey, a journey that involves constituting and re-constituting cultural identity. Do we understand the importance of our students' education and culture, the ground they bring with them? And what does this mean for our communications classes?

we didn't know how to talk

I found myself thinking of Taro's comments that the Japanese students were complaining about the communications class and wondered why it was that they were complaining. "Lucy, from Mexico, spoke a lot in class in communications. Lots of Japanese students really can't speak English well, so they were complaining."

Is there something here about working or not working in groups? While many instructors commonly

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[6]Anderson, Ibid., 103-104.

include group work in their classes, how many opportunities are there for consensus decision making and a group response? And in our program, the groups are international. Were the students complaining because they felt that other students could speak better than they could? Would they have been happier making a few formal speeches? One teacher has noted that Japanese "students are hesitant to talk in settings where they will stand out in front of their peers. (They) want to speak for a group safely rather than make themselves vulnerable as individuals."[7]

If these students were hesitant in the first place, unlike the student from Mexico, who "spoke a lot," and if they wanted to be able to work in groups and come up with a group response and were asked instead to speak individually, then it doesn't seem surprising that they might be unhappy, that they might be uncomfortable, especially if they felt they didn't know how to talk.

> They said, in their opinion, they have got not enough skills, not enough English skills to speak in class, so they really wanted the teacher to teach how to speak, how to communicate with Canadian people, but all (the teacher) did was just give us topic and then talk about it. Of course, we didn't know how to talk . . . .

What do they mean, "We didn't know how to talk"? And what can we do to teach them how to talk? Merry White's comment on creativity in Japanese education can, I think, also be applied to communications: "The belief is that before a child can be truly creative or even express himself, he must be taught possibilities and limits of the medium; in short, one learns how to use the existing forms first."[8]

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[7]Anderson, Ibid., 103.

[8]Merry White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1987), 81.

We expect students to communicate, especially in terms of "the casual expression of 'original' ideas,"[9] but are we teaching them the forms? We want them to speak, but do we teach them how? Or do we let them rely on kind of a trial and error process, where the language comes from them – "what we did is just from ourselves, not from teacher" – where it's OK to make mistakes? We can tell them it's all right to make mistakes, that they can learn from their mistakes, but what real impact will this have on someone who has grown up in Japanese society, where the making of mistakes is not seen as a way of learning? We're up against a cultural predisposition, something that won't be overcome by a few friendly words of advice from the English instructor during the first week of class.

To what extent do we take into account the socializing and learning patterns of Japanese students? What does this mean for us as teachers of these students?

voice of a teacher

Doris, a teacher in the English Language Program, talked about her experiences in the communications classes in this way:

> I started with a lot of student centered activities, projects, where basically the teacher was doing just a small amount of talking in preparation for the activities, the projects, and then the students would take over and they would talk amongst themselves, and the idea was that they would do all the talking, the majority of the talking, and they'd be using different strategies . . . for

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[9]Anderson, Ibid., 105.

different projects, but I found that actually, although it did get them talking, and I wasn't talking as much, it turned out they were actually quite dissatisfied . . . with the projects. They felt they weren't learning very much English that way, they felt they were just doing all the talking, they weren't doing any learning, so I found myself in a dilemma in the communications classes, you know, I want them to learn English but how do you teach someone to have a conversation, or how do you teach someone to have a discussion . . . ?

I went back actually to just using a lot of teacher led methods, and (they) actually enjoyed them a lot more, but whether they improved their English as much I don't know, (but) they had more fun doing it. I also started off this time teaching strategies, gambits, openers, interrupters, restarting conversations, and things like that, and I would start a class by listing six of them, and say, 'OK, we're going to talk about (whatever) today, but we're going to use these particular gambits, these structures.' They had a focus, they were going to be talking about something, but they had to use these three or four or five interrupters. We did much more of that. They seemed to enjoy it a lot more, the classes seemed to have much more of a flavour to them, and so, I guess I count success by how much they enjoyed . . . . It was a better way.[10]

allowing openings for languages and cultures

If we are to try to make our language program more meaningful for our students, then we as teachers need to understand the students' backgrounds, the places they are coming from but are no longer, in relation to their changing cultural identities. What we could do, too, is to try to learn about different styles of learning and interacting and try to incorporate different activities in our classes that reflect, recognize, or allow openings for those different styles of communicating. In such ways we could do a better job of recognizing and meeting some of the needs of our students.

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[10]Conversation, July 2, 1999.

We can only go so far with this though, and we need also to recognize the betweenness of these same students. Doris noted that in a communications class with students from Quebec, Mexico, Taiwan, and Japan that the Japanese students had some difficulties with the more gregarious style of the North American students. They took more time to consider questions, time that showed respect for the teacher. This was not a Japanese class though, this was a class that was between cultures and languages.

> With many of the (Japanese) students I would find that, I guess, they want more information from the instructor . . . , they like to be fed information. I get the feeling that they would like me to write it all down, *but at the same time* are eager to try something different, because a lot of them will express how they enjoy a North American classroom as opposed to a Japanese classroom, because it's more lively, there's more interaction, *but at the same time* I think getting out of these cultural binds is quite difficult . . . (italics mine).[11]

Taro appears to have been at least partly successful in "getting out of these cultural binds," in moving to a place of betweenness. Along with his own sense of independence, his experiences with the Mexican students helped him to communicate with students from cultures that are different and yet the same as his own. "With Mexican people, somehow I could be more friendlier, outgoing, because they are like that so I become like them . . . ." And in becoming like them, Taro was reinforcing and nurturing his own being between cultures and languages. How can his experiences inform our teaching?

The students in the English Language Program come from many cultures and backgrounds. Taro's friendships with the Mexican students points to the critical importance of providing opportunities

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[11]Ibid.

for students to interact comfortably in and out of the classroom. In Taro's case, it was the pairing with a Mexican student in his homestay family that allowed them to get to know each other. They became friends, and that relationship led to others. Those friendships led those students to places where they could explore their betweenness within the learning of a new language. For Taro, the homestay family placement provided both personal support and opportunities for learning.

Doris points to the importance of an open and comfortable classroom environment in responding to differences, a classroom where students "feel they can approach an instructor and say 'I didn't understand, I wasn't sure.' " She talks of her role as a teacher, and her teaching style. "I like to be in there with them, and a lot of them seem to respond to that, and enjoy that . . . . I think it builds a relationship . . . , it keeps them coming back to the classes . . . . They feel like they're building a relationship with you, they have this connection, and they're interested in you, as you are in them, as opposed to saying 'OK, let's get in groups and talk about cultural differences.' "[12]

Such understandings of communicating begin to speak to our becoming as teachers between languages and cultures.

as teachers between

Fred Anderson writes:

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[12]Ibid.

> Classroom interaction is more than a mere reflection of adult society: It in many ways systematically prepares students for it. That their educational background may not have prepared the Japanese students for success in international settings is something that many discover for the first time when confronted with a non-Japanese instructor in a college English class.[13]

Curtis Kelly notes the important "hidden role" of Japanese colleges and universities, that of providing a time and place for students to mature. He goes on to suggest that the appeal of English in Japan is due to its role as a "counterculture" and the specific "maturing function that English, the language of the counterculture serves." "Even today, English – especially as a result of the exposure to other cultures it provides – may be playing a role in shaping Japanese character."[14]

What do their words mean for us as teachers?

Our students are the ones who have decided to go beyond the traditional Japanese culture, and even some, like Taro, rejecting entirely the Japanese post-secondary educational system along with its very important socializing functions which help to prepare students for adult roles in Japanese society. If we accept Fred Anderson's comment that their educational background may not have prepared them for success in international settings, what are we as their teachers now doing to prepare them for success in these international settings? And by this I am not suggesting a colonial assimilation to the western culture in which they appear to be immersed, but a postcolonial awareness of the space in-between cultures in which they are now actually immersed.

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[13]Anderson, Ibid., 107.

[14]Curtis Kelly, "The Hidden Role of the University," in Wadden, Ibid., 184-5.

And what does this mean for us as teachers? What about our own changing identities? As a teacher, my belief has always been that we are not teaching subjects, we are teaching students, and once we begin to recognize who and where our students are, then we must consider our own positions, not just as English teachers, or teachers of 'Japanese' students, but as international educators.

What we're really doing here is helping a group of younger people make sense of a critical phase of their lives in a new language, one that is possibly the only way they can make sense of it at this time, given for now the seeming cultural and linguistic strictures of their first language and culture.

Curtis Kelly's words regarding a group of Japanese university students seem to me to be relevant for our students: "The needs of these students – to develop self-esteem, to express themselves, to clarify their positions within society – are among the basic human needs for which language exists. As such, language, even a foreign language, has the potential to satisfy these needs."[15]

Language, as always, is serving human needs. And here the needs of our students can be understood once we begin to realize where they are, in this space between cultures. And so our own identities as teachers are seen to be between too. As international educators, we too are between cultures and languages, reaching to meet our students.

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[15]Ibid., 184.

Chapter 6
Interpreting a Conversation with Victoria

oh, what did I say?

Victoria came to Canada last fall from Taiwan with three other young women. "Before I came here

with them, (the) four of us were in . . . kind of a university, also kind of a language school." She

came to the college to study English. "I came here, my point is I want to learn English, so I should

speak English." Her English has improved, and after nearly a year in our program, she plans to go

to Victoria next semester to study university transfer courses at another college.

In addition to the work she has done in her classes in the English Language Program, Victoria has

had help from her family and friends. "People here are very friendly and kind and they always help

me sometime, because I have to improve my English . . . . My host mother always helped me to

review my homework, or to play kind of games or to change my vocabulary, and they (are) always

talking with me."

"I have a room mate, Eri. She is from Japan and sometime we talk lots. I think that it is better to

have a roommate than live alone, because first I can practice my English, and second if I treat her

as my sister, we know each other very much just like we were sisters."

In Taiwan, Victoria only used English in school, for tests. I ask her if her feelings about English

have changed. "Yes, before I came here I got a lot information about the school, but all in English,

so I couldn't read it all, maybe (only) 40% I could understand, but now, when I took my information

and I reread it again, I can understand everything. (When) I came here, the first month, when I was

watching TV, I couldn't understand at all, but now TV for me is no problem. I always fell asleep when I was watching TV (before), I was getting bored, but now I enjoy it."

She has become used to studying in an English-speaking college. "To talk to my roommates and classmates I have to speak English. Before (when) I was taking notes, sometimes I would use Chinese, but now I use English to take my notes, because English is much quicker. When teachers speak very fast I want to take notes, but I don't have time, I just, 'Oh, I got English' so I write English."

"Last December, I came back to Taiwan. When I first got to Taiwan I was so excited, but I had to take time to find everything back. When I arrived in my country I heard all Mandarin. I just said 'Oh, that sounds strange for me.' I wasn't used to hearing Mandarin, I felt it's really strange. I even couldn't believe I was speaking Mandarin, even (when) I heard myself, (my) voice, 'Oh, what did I say?' "

feeling more confident

Victoria's journey to improving her use and understanding of English has taken place in and out of the classroom.

The classes have provided Victoria with opportunities to become more confident. "With people in

class I can say my opinion and everyone and teacher will listen when I was talking. I feel more confident, because I have my own opinion, everyone listens."

"In Taiwan, we only, when we were in class, we just listened, and take notes. Even (when the) teacher sometimes asks students the answers, no one will answer." It took part of the first semester for Victoria to begin to get used to the Canadian system. "I needed to take two months (before speaking in class here) because I wasn't used to answering or to saying my opinion in the class, and sometimes I was afraid, maybe I was wrong to say something." She doesn't worry about that now, though. "It is good for me because I will remember what I said wrong in class, I will remember what I did. It's hard to forget . . . because I said in front of people and I was wrong, so I wouldn't be wrong again."

I ask her how her English has improved since she has been here. "Before I came here my listening was my best part, but now my writing and reading. My reading has improved a lot. I can read novels, even if sometimes I couldn't understand the words, but I still can understand most meanings."

"How about speaking?" I ask. "I think . . . we don't have too many classes for speaking, so I only can use my free time to speak with other countries' students." I ask her what has helped her speaking to improve. "Friends and homestay family," she replied.

like a mountain

Victoria told me about some of the differences between the writing she is doing in her English classes and the writing she did in Chinese.

"It's quite different, because in this essay (in English), if you want to say something, you emphasize it. I will say straightly what I want to say, but in Taiwan, sometimes I didn't stress, write down the real meaning, then . . . the meaning is under the word. Like maybe in literature, the real meaning is under the story."

"When we are writing an essay (in English), we have thesis statement (in) the first paragraph, the introduction. In your introduction you have to let readers know what you are going to talk about, but when I was writing in Taiwan, the first paragraph . . . (had) something to attract my reader, but sometimes I cannot tell or I shouldn't tell them what I'm going to say after. Then I will show my point, what I really want to say, in the middle, and then the conclusion, it's like a mountain."

"Like this essay I am writing (for class) about crimes of teenagers, (if I were writing in Chinese) in the first paragraph I will write 'Nowadays in society, parents and businessmen are working hard to make money.' I will talk about society. The second paragraph will be the cause . . . . The conclusion I will probably write is that 'parents have to take care of their children, businessmen have to stop selling their products to teenagers if the product is not good for the teenagers, then our society will become very peaceful.' In Chinese tradition people always expect happy endings."

"In Canadian essay I have to say (in the first paragraph) that 'there are reasons why the crimes of teenagers is increasing.' Maybe I would not say 'parents have responsibility for teenagers' and I will not say 'our society will become peaceful.' Maybe I will not say that."

I ask if this understanding of writing has changed the way she looked at things. "A lot, maybe the way my writing before always affect me to think everything will have a happy ending, but the real way it won't happen."

not only learning English

The volunteering program in her communications class has helped Victoria communicate. "I was in Level 04, I had volunteering, it was not too bad. I was volunteering in Salvation Army, and I met Canadians in the store and I also met (the manager). She's quite a nice lady, and sometimes we run into (each other) on the street and we still talk. She was very nice." While she improved her vocabulary through this experience, the real value for Victoria was in communicating on her own.

"If I went to volunteer by myself, just me, not others . . . , I can do something with Canadians. It's getting independent, because sometimes at school maybe we will stay with other students or friends." Victoria realizes the importance of acting on her own. "So study abroad is not only learning English, it's getting independent, self-confident."

between cultures and languages

While becoming independent and self-confident in a new language and culture is not easy for students, Victoria found herself in a particularly difficult situation. She had come to the college with three friends from home, and experienced a strong form of peer pressure from the other Taiwanese students. "In my country people always are used to being close, always getting together, so, in my case, four of us, we were, we are good friends here."

When she first came to the college, Victoria tried to make some new friends too, and that led to difficulties with her old friends. "When I came here . . . , I tried to make a lot of friends, so I didn't always stay with them, (but) sometimes they might think, 'Oh, you should stay with us, but you didn't.' So sometimes maybe they will think you were wrong, but for Canadians, you didn't do nothing wrong, because you have your opportunity, your choice to make other friends, you didn't hurt someone. It's kind of culture pressure for me."

The four students met every day in the cafeteria for lunch. "One day, we had big argument . . . , but we were speaking Mandarin, so maybe nobody knows." The argument left Victoria feeling uncomfortable and distanced from the other three Taiwanese students.

"After the big argument, after two weeks, maybe it look like nothing happened, but when I want to talk to another people, I might think 'Oh, maybe they will be looking at me, I couldn't talk with others,' but now I don't care, it doesn't matter, because this is why I came to Canada. I should speak

English. I cannot always stay with you, but if I have some problems, you are still my best friend. Friends (do) not always get together all the day, like in my mind, you are always my best friend, but . . . ."

This was not easy for her. "Yeah, like I told them we shouldn't be together all the time, at the beginning, maybe they misunderstand what I'm trying to say, they might think 'Oh you changed.' They told me 'When you came here, you came to Canada, you changed a lot.' I know I changed a lot, but I would never say it's not good for me."

"Can I ask you a question? Have you ever met this kind of question before, from students?"

I reply, "Not in these interviews, but certainly as a teacher. Over the years I know we've had students who have . . . come here determined to speak only English, but who have had trouble doing it if there's a strong group of friends. That one person tries to be on their own, and often they'll get rejected, or they'll get pulled back in. It's really hard to escape that group. I think your experience is a common one."

"If I came here alone, and I met them here, then I wouldn't be together with them (all the time)."

"I think that's what will happen when you go to Victoria by yourself."

"But you know, I really hope sometimes I couldn't understand Mandarin, then I cannot understand

what they are talking about me, sometimes."

maybe I was the same as her before

In our second interview, I asked Victoria if she had been thinking about our earlier conversation. "In first interview you have told me one thing I think is very important. I remember you told me I can have fun studying here with my friends and we just speak Mandarin, but finally, actually, you will find out you didn't learn anything, so it's my choice, so this affects me very much, so this day I was thinking about it."

"After last interview I was thinking, from (the time) I came here I lost many chance to make other friends coming from different countries and I also always stayed together with my friends who come from Taiwan, so I didn't have many chance to speak English."

"Yesterday one of them told me 'Today I haven't spoken English yet.' From last interview, I was thinking about between my friends, Taiwanese friends and me. These days I didn't always stay with them, so . . . I was thinking maybe I was the same as her before, but yesterday I didn't have the same feeling as her because I always walk to other people and speak to them."

"I think I learned more . . . , maybe this is very important for me, because it's why I came here. I came here for English, so I shouldn't speak Mandarin."

Victoria has had support from her roommate, Eri. "Eri told me about (another Japanese student). She is very independent, and she told Eri, 'You can make lots of Japanese friends if you want, that's your choice, but the point is you come here to study English, not speak Japanese, so if . . . you can not walk out from your Japanese group, then you will only speak Japanese.' So now Eri always, even though she stays with her Japanese friends, she always asks them to speak English, so it's good."

"But for me, if I want to ask my friends to speak English maybe it is quite difficult for me . . . ." Victoria is afraid her Taiwanese friends will criticize her English. "If I speak wrong English they will think 'You are not smart, you are just the same as me.' So I would rather talk with someone like Eri, even though I got wrong English, it doesn't hurt myself, (but) for me to speak to them it is quite hard."

only me

Some of the activities at the college have helped Victoria become more independent. "Like soccer game, when we went to a party, my teacher Sheila was there, and one of the Japanese guys said, 'Oh yeah, we need some girls to come to the soccer game,' and Sheila said, 'Oh, maybe, Victoria, you can go to their soccer game,' and I said 'Oh yeah, I can go.' (So the) next day he went to my house to pick me up. I went to the soccer game, only me, no one else from Taiwan, it were really great. I can tell I am much closer to other friends . . . . I went to the soccer game twice."

I ask her if she feels responsible for her Taiwanese friends. "Before maybe I was feeling kind of guilty, but now I don't think so." I ask her about the change. "I feel I am just me, I don't belong to someone else, I should be myself."

worried about the border

Travelling has given Victoria more confidence and independence. "If I have English skills I can travel by myself, I would not be afraid to travel, because I enjoy . . . , I can do something by myself."

"I went to Seattle by myself. The first time I was afraid, kind of nervous, I didn't know which stop I should get off the bus. I also was worried about the border, if I couldn't understand what they talked, what should I do? So I just tried to find nice lady, if I have question I could ask her or bus driver, but I didn't have any problem to communicate with the border."

"My friend is in Seattle, so I went there to see him. I have been there three times now. He's Taiwanese, we spoke Mandarin, (but) we spoke English in restaurants. When I was in Seattle, if I want something I have to (do it) by myself, so I have to talk in English because my friend will not help me. He said 'You should buy by yourself in English.' "

I ask her how she feels about her travelling. "Great, because I did something, I can do it. Now I'm going to go to England the end of this year."

inter-viewing

I ask Victoria how she feels about our conversations. "When I talk to you, I tell you my feelings and you agree with me, so . . . I think you play the same role as Eri, and other people who helped me. I don't know how to say, for me in my mind it really helped a lot. I think I am a lucky student because I have chance to interview, then I can change my mind. I can get independent, I think I am right to do that, but maybe some students are studying in English right now, maybe they are still confused, but no one tells them 'You should just do it, you are right.' "

I say that I try to encourage teachers to interview and talk to their students, but I sometimes feel that we don't do enough of this. We talk about the word 'interviewing.' "It has two parts, inter-viewing" I say. "When we are inter-viewing we are looking at and learning about each other."

Victoria asks, "And do you think it would be much easier for Canadians who want to study Mandarin or Japanese, if they go to Japan, Taiwan or China?"

"I don't think it would be easier, I guess I would have to say it's probably similar," I reply. "You're learning a different language, different text, different script, different culture, everything would be different."

"Maybe for Asian students, maybe for Canadians too, in our age, especially girls, because we are used to (being) always in small groups. It's very obvious in (some) students, and so it's big

problem."

I share a story with Victoria about one of my own experiences. "Something you said about confidence made me think of an experience when I was visiting Asia on college business two years ago. The handle on my attache case had broken while I was in Taiwan, and as soon as I got to Japan I had to buy a new bag. I went to a department store and asked in Japanese if they had any suitcases. I felt very confident going to Japan and being able to say that with my limited Japanese, and when you talk about going to England or going to Seattle, no problem, I feel that way about Japan, I can find my way around."

Victoria and I talk about the meanings of the terms interviewing and international. "If you look at these two words, interviewing and international, and the idea of inter-viewing, looking across, between, inter-national is that way too." I start drawing circles in a ring on a piece of paper. "Here's one nation, and here's another nation, and another, and if you're in here, you're kind of between, you're not here in this nation, you're not in this nation, not in this one, you're somewhere in the middle, between. I think that's where you are and where I am too to some extent. That's what this is all about, I'm trying to find out what it's like to be there."

"But from here," she says, pointing to one of the circles, "to the middle is a long way, and very tough."

"But you got there. And how does it feel to be there?"

"Great!"

tension and difficulty

When I read Victoria's story, I am reminded again of Curtis Kelly's words: "The needs of these students – to develop self-esteem, to express themselves, to clarify their positions within society – are among the basic human needs for which language exists."[1] Here we have a student in a location between languages and cultures who is trying to do just what Kelly describes. She is expressing herself, she is trying to clarify her position within her society, and she is developing her self-esteem as she does so. And she is having difficulty doing so.

Her journey has not been an easy one, "very tough," as she says. I recall the words of Kim Kimiko Hirose, who wrote of her own experiences in this way:

> As I live in Canada at present, the tension and difficulty I feel regarding my identity continually appears and reappears. There is a constant shift of emotions concerning where I belong, how I view myself and what I feel most comfortable doing . . . .[2]

Victoria's story shows us some of the difficulties a student can have in living in between languages and cultures. How are we to understand her story, and how can our understanding help us in our

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[1]Curtis Kelly, "The Hidden Role of the University," in Paul Wadden (ed.), *A Handbook for Teaching English at Japanese Colleges and Universities*, 184.

[2]Kim Kimiko Hirose, "Teaching English in Japan, Japanese in Canada: Live(d) Experiences of a Japanese-Canadian Teacher" (Major Paper, The University of British Columbia, 1995), 27.

curriculum work?

a different understanding

I think we tend to see the process of gaining independence and confidence in terms of the steps that a student makes towards the new culture and language, a moving into the middle, rather than in terms of moving away from the old. Here is someone wanting to make those steps, but struggling with the culture and language of home. Victoria values her friends, but knows she has to change, and yet cannot easily move away from them. How can we help students like Victoria, like the others she told me about? "Maybe some students are studying in English right now, maybe they are still confused, but no one tells them 'You should just do it, you are right.' "

As teachers we try to break students up so that they do not stay in their cultural and language groups, but it is difficult. We try to arrange groups in classes differently, we advise them in interviews to speak English, we try to mix them in activities, but it's tiring work, and we often feel like we're working against the tide. What else could we do?

Louise, a colleague and teacher in the English Language Program, and I talked about this. She said:

> Peer pressure, or the fear of being ostracized, or the experience of being ostracized is really great. These poor kids that come here find out they really can, maybe, have a chance of being independent and having adventures and experiences without all that pressure from the peers from their own culture, (but) they're stuck . . . , their first friends invariably will be people from their

same culture. That becomes that group and it's very hard to break out of that.
We talk about ways we can help.

> I think by talking about it, that's one way, because if it's just something that we never address, then it just continues without anyone having to look at themselves, without anyone having to look at it. They think it's unique to them, but it isn't, and I think when we think that we're alone in that experience then we feel trapped, even more trapped by it, but when we realize that it happens across cultures . . . , I think that there's something liberating about that. And too, we can encourage them taking those brave steps outside of that.[3]

Victoria, as well as both Linka and Taro, mentioned to me the influence of an older or more experienced student in helping them and other students succeed in using English. "Teresa always said, 'Oh you should do something by yourself.' Teresa is very good because if we are talking in a group, if there is someone who comes from different countries, we speak all English."

International students like Teresa know a lot about communicating successfully in a different language and culture, so it makes sense to involve them in the learning process when it comes to modeling strategies for successful language learning and intercultural behaviour.

Something we have started this year is to offer our most advanced students opportunities to become volunteer cultural assistants. We felt that these experienced and successful students could act as role models for other students in the program. We have always had local Canadian students as cultural assistants, but their focus has been in becoming friends and English language partners with international students as well as introducing them to our region and to Canadian culture. The role

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[3]Conversation, August 12, 1999.

of the international volunteer cultural assistants is a different one, as we have begun to recognize

that they are modeling successful inter-cultural behaviour.

And this speaks to a different understanding of what we are doing, working in the English language

program in our inter-national education department.

inter-cultural speakers

Michael Byram and Michael Fleming, writing of developments in language learning and teaching,

note that there has been:

> a change in our perception of what they (learners) should be aiming to achieve. Instead of the assumption that learners should model themselves on 'the native speaker', it is becoming apparent to teachers and their learners that successful cross-cultural communication depends on the acquisition of abilities to understand different modes of thinking and living, as they are embodied in the language to be learnt, and to reconcile or mediate between different modes present in any specific interaction. This is not the 'communicative competence' on which people using the same language in the same, or closely related, cultures rely; it is an 'intercultural communicative competence'. . . ."[4]

As our international students are mostly intending to return home, where they will use their English

to communicate with a variety of people from different countries and cultures,[5] then the ability to

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[4]Michael Byram and Michael Fleming, "Introduction," in Byram and Fleming, (eds.), *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through Drama and Ethnography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12.

[5]Claire Kramsch, "The privilege of the intercultural speaker," in Byram and Fleming, Ibid., 23.

communicate inter-culturally becomes desirable and necessary. In Antonia Cooper's words, "the

formation of multicultural teams as a result of changes in society and internationalism demand

cross-cultural understanding and a knowledge of languages."[6]

In our program, then, we are not only offering English language skills and preparation for other

college programs, but the opportunity for our students to become what Byram, Fleming, Zarate,

Kramsch, and others have termed 'intercultural speakers.'[7]

Claire Kramsch writes:

> The characteristic of a 'competent language user' (is) not the ability to speak and
> write according to the rules of the academy and the social etiquette of one social
> group, but the adaptability to select those forms of accuracy and those forms of
> appropriateness that are called for in a given social context of use. This form of
> competence is precisely the competence of the 'intercultural' speaker, operating at
> the border between several languages or language varieties, manoeuvring his/her way
> through the troubled waters of cross-cultural misunderstandings. That, not the
> untroubled mythical native speaker, then, should be our model.[8]

These words recognize and confirm the place of culture within the teaching and learning of language

in our program. They also give new meaning to the name of our inter-national education department,

for this is where we as teachers and students are working, with students from different countries,

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[6]Antonia Cooper, "Mind the gap! An ethnographic approach to cross-cultural workplace
communication," in Byram and Fleming, Ibid., 123.

[7]Byram and Fleming, Ibid., 8, and Kramsch, Ibid., 17.

[8]Kramsch, Ibid., 27, with reference to R. Le Page and A. Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of
Identity. Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1985).

including Canada, who are living in a place between languages and cultures, and, as Victoria and I discussed, between nations.

It seems to me that such an awareness and understanding helps us to see our goals and our work more clearly, and also helps us to put into place ways in which we can help students like Victoria achieve her goals.

working in an inter-cultural classroom

Claire Kramsch notes that "allowing students to become intercultural speakers, therefore, means encouraging teachers to see themselves, too, as brokers between cultures of all kinds."[9] While I would use the language of working between, rather than brokering, what does this mean for teachers working in an intercultural place? How does an inter-cultural teacher work with students?

Louise told me about the ways she works with students in her writing classes.

> I've had students from Quebec, Korea, Mexico, Japan, Taiwan, and they came from very different backgrounds, different language groups, different ways of understanding writing. If we think about what language is and how language expresses culture, that's all something we can bring in, but what they put into (their writing) has to come from their own experience, their own understanding.
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> By looking at world literature, at writing from very different cultures, (there's often a) look of recognition (when they realize) this is similar to

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[9]Kramsch, Ibid., 30.

where they come from too. They're all recognizing that this is something they're dealing with wherever they're from. I think finding good examples from literature and from other student writing is very useful.

I encourage them to tell their stories, and their own successes their own failures, whatever they're comfortable with. For some students it might be a new pair of shoes, or following the latest fashions, but what else is important? What have they learned from their parents, their grandparents? So I do try to use their own personal stories.

But you can't only use personal narratives or personal experiences, you have to sometimes look at something outside of that, at issues. What are the things that are going on around us that we can look at?

What you have to do, I think, is look at something and think about it and discuss it, to find out the various ways of looking at it. First of all, we have the reading, the idea, or the cultural experience, or the personal story, but from that, we talk about it. What does that mean? How does that look from each person's point of view? How can we understand that? So there's talking in small groups, maybe two or three, or the whole class may have ideas on something. There's a lot of talking, a lot of thinking and processing stuff so they're not just doing it entirely in a vacuum. Then we'd work on the structure, then they have to do it themselves. I think, afterwards, how to share their finished product, I'm working on that part too.

All of those things are challenging for the students and I think when they actually have a chance to do it and they succeed at it and they are encouraged in their successes, it's exciting.[10]

Here is a teacher working in an intercultural classroom. She doesn't talk much about the differing cultures, though they're certainly there, and she knows what different students need. What she talks about is how she and her students work together, "allowing space for stories, anecdotes, and narratives that embody the lived dimension of curriculum life."[11]

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[10]Conversation, August 12, 1999

[11]Ted. T. Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum: Towards a Curricular Landscape of Multiplicity," 263.

Louise's words recall the words of another ESL teacher, Sue Rice. We can listen to her voice as she

writes about teaching in an intercultural classroom:

> Questions arise from a shift in the place where I stand as an ESL teacher. I focus less
> and less on *ethnic identities*. Rather, I've come to appreciate the reality of an ESL
> class as experienced by teachers and students: the reality of living in the space of
> differences in language and culture. Thus, I resist being lulled into the comfort of
> focussing on ethnic identities: rather, I try to move into the lived space between
> identities, the reality for any ESL teacher.[12]

Teachers like these have positioned themselves where their students are, in the middle, and show

an openness and caring that allows room for the lived curriculum of their students' lives to grow.

Victoria, too, felt the caring of a teacher who was working in the space between identities, a teacher

who recognized that identities are changing, and who was open to her experiences, experiences that

were sometimes "very tough." Victoria said, "I can feel that Sheila cares. Even though she didn't

say anything about the problems between the four of us, I can feel she always cares about us. I can

feel it." Sheila's caring helped Victoria as her identity was changing in a place between languages

and cultures.

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[12]Sue Rice, "Living Midst Differences in an ESL Class", in Ted T. Aoki, (ed.), *Teachers
Narrating / Narratives Teaching: Pac Rim Experiences* (Victoria, B.C.: Government of British
Columbia, National and International Education Branch, 1992), 18.

not easy to find rest

In the inter-viewing that Victoria and I did, and in the reading and writing, and re-reading and re-writing of this chapter, I began to recall some of my other experiences in Japan, experiences that were not so easy as the one I had shared with Victoria about my new attache case and the way I could now find my way around Japan. I remembered a story I had written about one of those earlier experiences, a story that later became a paper for one of my first and most meaningful courses in this Master's Degree program, a course that opened my understanding to new ways of looking at experiences and identities.

At the time, I had gone to visit a small island in Japan's Inland Sea during a business trip in the late fall for what I had thought would be a restful day or two. Later I wrote:

> This was a time of unexpected unease and strangeness, coupled, intermingled with encounters of friendship. The events and my feelings of that day and night stand out clearly. What was I experiencing, amidst the fears of a tired and lonely traveller, the welcome offered a stranger, a learner in a strange culture, the forming and unforming of identities? It was a time of tension and of learning.
>
> Was it one sense of self and other being destroyed, a shaking up of identity? My 'becoming' in that part of Japan had to do with the tension I experienced in dealing with my surroundings, with the mixing of self and others, seemingly clearly different then, a difference felt strongly by the stranger, and yet mixed in this narrative, and in this experience. A mixing with others, and a mixing with the other, internally, culturally, inter-culturally, so much so that I cannot think of this time without thinking both of my own feelings and experience and my encounters with others. Old ways of seeing, of being, were changing.
>
> Looking back, having travelled and lived in Japan, now I can recognize that

island, the people, the streets of the town in other places I go in Japan. But that was one of my first impressions of Japan, and it has led me to think about the experiences of learning, of becoming, of being between my own culture and another, a place where my students dwell all the time, a place where I am beginning to dwell, beginning to move in the space of inter-culture, the space where languages move together, the spaces where languages move us.[13]

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[13]John Armstrong, "Shodoshima Wind: A Stranger Travelling in Japan," (Paper, MLED 508B, The University of British Columbia, August 1994), 4-5.

Chapter 7
Understanding the Research

questions

"How should we understand the lived meanings and identities students discover and constitute while experiencing life midst languages and cultures in the curriculum of an English language program at a community college?"

This thesis has sought to look at and try to understand the ways students discover and constitute meaning and identity in the spaces between languages and cultures. The narratives of the students, the stories of teachers, the texts of writers of theory, and the interpretation of these voices in a place between them all have contributed to this understanding.

Following the work of Stuart Hall and Ted Aoki, I have tried to look for and represent identities "as production, in the throes of being constituted . . . in places of difference"[1] with an understanding of cultural identities as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'."[2] I have drawn on the work of Homi Bhabha in placing and understanding the location of the experiences in the " 'in-between' spaces" between languages and cultures.[3] I have looked for ties to language learning that would help us in our understanding of curriculum.

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[1]Ted T. Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum: Towards a Curricular Landscape of Multiplicity," 259-60.

[2]Stuart Hall, "Cultural Difference and Diaspora," in J. Rutherford, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* 223.

[3]Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 1.

Many questions have appeared in the work of doing this study. What have the narratives told us? What meanings and identities have the students discovered and constituted while experiencing their lives midst languages and cultures? What ideas have emerged in the spaces between the students' stories, the reflections of teachers, and the texts that informed this study? How does the study converse with the voices of contemporary theory? What questions and implications are there for language learning, for curriculum, and for us as teachers, educators, and researchers?

One set of such questions has to address the research question itself. Did the interviews with the students show these processes of discovering and constituting identity? Did they show identities becoming, with similarities and differences, in both one culture and the other culture, and in neither one nor the other?[4] How can we understand the findings of the study?

A second set of questions focuses on the meanings of the research. What are the implications of this work for our practice as educators, for our engagement in theory, and for further research and inquiry? How does this study help us in our understanding of curriculum from these perspectives? What does this work do to point to directions, confirm our course, show us new signs, question assumptions, and lead to openings? What new understandings emerge?

Finally, what about my own experiences in doing this research? What has this work meant for me, for my writing, for my own cultural identity as a student, teacher, department head, writer, and researcher?

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[4]Aoki, Class Conversation, July 1996.

These are some of the questions that guide the writing of this chapter.

analyzing the research

What do the stories of Linka, Taro, and Victoria tell us? The conversations we had together have led me to a new understanding of the spaces where they live and work as international students, between languages and cultures. Their lived experiences have helped me gain a new understanding of the work we are doing as language teachers and international educators.

Linka tried to speak English with her friends and host family and to immerse herself in the language, but then she was asked to translate, to speak Japanese. Uncomfortable as a translator, she asked her family not to ask her to translate, but through the experience she realized she could help someone and came to a new understanding of her language abilities.

In the classroom too, she tried to talk, but at the same time she was still afraid, still shy, not wanting to make a mistake. Linka explained, "We are looking for exactly the right word." Other students, though, saw her as successful and as a good role model, as Taro unknowingly told us when he said, "Look at Linka, she never be afraid." As she tried to talk in class, as some of her non-Japanese friends do, her feelings played an important role: "Depends on day, my feelings. If I'm sleepy, thinking in my mind. If I feel fine, talk a lot. Sometimes same as Japanese, sometimes same as Quebecker."

Linka's interest in and sensitivity to different languages and cultures seem a component of her identity, an identity that is multiply constructed: "I don't know whether this is Japanese or Korean, or maybe my culture is kind of mixed up." Her story helps to open up our views of what it means to be 'Japanese', what it means to be 'Korean', what it means to be between.

Linka revealed a poignant sense of her location between cultures when she told me about being homesick. After beginning her time in Canada spending the summer with her homestay family, enjoying her new surroundings – " 'OK, I'm in Canada now' and . . . here is not Japan," – Linka woke up one morning dreaming of Japan and her family, and "thought, like almost, 'Mum!', almost called my Mum, and, 'Oh no, here is Canada,' so, well, but, I wasn't really sad, but some friends said, 'What's wrong with you?' " Those commas, those pauses, say so much about Linka's living in spaces of difference.

Taro came to Canada to study and obtain a university degree and tried to position himself correctly in his new culture: "When . . . in Rome," he says.

In his first semesters, he found himself between his own approach to language learning and that of some of the other Japanese students. At times he distanced himself from them and at other times apparently shared some of their concerns. His experience and his story open up terrain for questions in the area of cultural difference between student expectations and teacher planning.

Taro experienced cultural differences in daily life, and found himself sometimes confused,

sometimes embarrassed, sometimes amused, by doing things that sometimes weren't appropriate for the culture, a shifting back and forth. These experiences, as well as his successes, have given him confidence and a perspective on his positioning as he tries to locate himself between languages and cultures.

Taro left Japan vowing never to go back, but while in Canada has dis-covered good things about Japan: "I'm really proud of my country, some part of personality too . . . ." In getting to know people from Mexico, he learned a different way of looking at life: "With Mexican people, somehow I could be more friendlier, outgoing, because they are like that so I become like them."

Taro's story shows us what it is like for a student to try to negotiate between languages and cultures. His work positioning and locating himself draws our attention to the nature of living in such a place of borders and difference.

On returning home to Taiwan after her first semester in Canada, Victoria was excited, but "had to take time to find everything back." She wasn't used to hearing Mandarin, or to speaking it: "Even (when) I heard myself, (my) voice, 'Oh, what did I say?' " Her realization that studying abroad "is not only learning English, it's getting independent" opens up a curricular space for us, and for Victoria too.

That idea of "getting independent" took on a very personal meaning for Victoria as she struggled to move away from an identity she had come with, and was known by, towards one she was trying

to create, in a place between understandings of identities, a place of between-ness formed by cultures and languages. At times this must have been very painful for her: "I really hope sometimes I couldn't understand Mandarin, then I cannot understand what they are talking about me, sometimes." Her joy at succeeding in locating herself where she wanted to be is obvious as she begins to travel, makes new friends, and becomes more independent.

During her experience in the English Language Program, Victoria's identity has changed. Thinking of a friend and reflecting on her own journey, she says, "Maybe I was the same as her before." For Victoria, the between-ness that she shows us is not so much between a Chinese culture and a Canadian one, or between English and Chinese, as it is between her Taiwanese identity and her new and developing inter-cultural identity. Victoria's story opens up curricular possibilities for us as inter-national educators.

Homi Bhabha writes:

> Each time the encounter with identity occurs at the point at which something exceeds the frame of the image, it eludes the eye, evacuates the self as site of identity and autonomy and – most important – leaves a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance.[5]

The stories these students have shared tell of their encounters with identity, where something exceeds the frame of the existing image, elusive encounters that leave a trace, resist, and change the self as site of identity.

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[5]Bhabha, Ibid., 49.

understanding the research in the context of practice

Earlier in this thesis I asked, "Can we use these narratives in understanding and writing curriculum within an English language program?" I thought that there must be a tie to language learning, opportunities for teaching and learning, in this vibrant time of discovering and constituting identities. I felt that we must be able to learn from the stories that students would tell us about this critical time in their lives and through their stories improve our understanding of curriculum, both the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. What questions, what considerations are there in this research for our work as teachers and educators? What different understandings of curriculum emerge? What implications are suggested for our practice?

In having the conversations with the students, and in interpreting those conversations, I learned the value of the interviewing in itself, both for me and for the students. The interviews allowed me, as a department head with limited classroom time, to become engaged with the lived experiences of students in my department. I would recommend that any administrator take the time to talk to students. Interviews like these, scheduled not as a means of evaluating the students' progress or collecting their opinions about the program but simply as a way of providing times for listening to their stories and engaging in conversations, offer opportunities for learning and reflection.

Care needs to be taken with this, of course. A teacher or department head needs to be seen as being fair, not to appear to be favouring a select few. Confidentiality is critical in the building of trust. Students, and teachers too, need to know the purpose of the interviews, to know that they are not

being done in an evaluative sense by a senior administrator, but that they serve as a way for us to gain a better understanding of our students, and of ourselves as educators.

Our college mission statement has to do with empowering. In at least one case, the interviewing proved to be a source of empowerment and support for the student. Victoria told me: "I think you play the same role as Eri, and other people who helped me. I don't know how to say, for me in my mind it really helped a lot. I think I am a lucky student because I have chance to interview, then I can change my mind." And when, in our conversations, she started interviewing me, I felt her language learning had taken another step.

An opening for reflecting on curriculum came in thinking about the conversations I had had with students regarding our communications courses. Taro questioned the value of activities in communications classes, questioned the direction and role of the teacher, and questioned the purpose of the courses: "Actually I'm not quite sure about the definition of communication class here." In the conversations I had with Victoria and Linka, the communication classes were often marked by their absence in their narratives. When I asked Victoria what had helped her speaking to improve, she replied, "Friends and homestay family." "I think . . . we don't have too many classes for speaking . . . ." When I asked Linka about what had really helped her in her language learning, when I was hoping to get more information about our classes, she answered, "What has helped me a lot is, I think, my host brother . . . ."

One response to concerns such as these might be to focus on trying to improve the communications

courses in terms of content, delivery, and resources, and that would probably be valuable, but another would be to ask, "Where are these students communicating now and what can we do to help them there?" And from this kind of response, new questions emerge.

What are we doing to help students talk with their host families and friends, in the places where they actually live? What could we do to help them join in conversations, a joining that is critical, and conversations that are critical in their lives, conversations that would allow them to give voice to their experiences and help them to overcome the loneliness that Linka described when she said: "I feel like they are thinking I'm the same as air, just out of sight . . . . I feel like 'Hello everybody! I'm here, do you know? Do you remember about me?' "

How much of our communications curriculum relates to the actual lived experiences of students and their families? What can we do to support host families in their roles as language coaches? What can we as teachers learn from them? How often do we even talk to them? What language strategies do we teach so that our students can take advantage of the many opportunities we promote as conducive to language learning in a small community? How can we re-shape the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived to help and support students as they go about their own communicating?

From this understanding of communicating, other questions are constituted in our understanding of teaching and learning.

The developing of confidence appears to be critical in the experiences of language learning for these three students. Taro gained increased confidence from his bike trip and from being with his Mexican friends, Victoria from travelling on her own, and Linka from communicating more and more with her host family and friends. Both Linka and Victoria commented on the value of the volunteering they did in their communications classes. "So study abroad is not only learning English, it's getting independent," Victoria said. What can we do as teachers to encourage and promote that independence, to give the students language tools to help them move out on their own? What energy do we put into providing opportunities for students to gain confidence outside the classroom?

As teachers, we tend to focus on classroom experiences, which after all, are the place of our work with students. As language educators though, we need to broaden our gaze so that we can see some of the experiences our students, as language learners, have outside the classroom. The classroom is only a temporary site, after all; the community is the place where students use English. The stories Linka, Taro, and Victoria have told provide us with a look into their worlds as language learners in our program. Do we as teachers tend to put too much emphasis on the classroom experience? How can we consider the students' own communities in their language learning? How are we to understand those communities?

When we look at the relationship between the classroom and the community, at the everyday life of our students, then we can see the importance of students interacting among themselves in and out of the classroom. Taro and Linka tell of their friendships with students from Mexico and Quebec, and how they are drawn to becoming "like them" and how their ways of communicating change.

Victoria tells of the thrill of being the only Taiwanese person on the soccer team. As Taro, Linka, and Victoria got to know people from cultures other than their own, as their cultural identities re-formed, they appeared to become more comfortable using English to communicate and more engaged in communicating, both in their international classroom and in their international community.

Often though, as all three of the narratives have shown, it can be difficult for students to move outside of their own cultural and language groups. How can we provide opportunities for students from different backgrounds, different countries, different cultures, and different languages to get to know and respect each other, to become comfortable together, to become friends, to begin to work and communicate together?

An understanding of curriculum that includes the students' community gives support to the work we do at our college providing opportunities for students to mingle and interact with each other and with our Canadian student cultural assistants. We arrange class field trips, picnics, pot luck dinners, cultural festivals, Hallowe'en dances, movie nights, and skiing and snowboarding trips. All of these activities, perhaps traditionally seen as 'extra-curricular' or as opportunities for local community contact, become in this view critical components and sites of the English language program curriculum, as they offer possibilities for students to interact with each other as peers as they negotiate the terms of their own inter-national community.

The relationships formed with friends and family outside of the classroom facilitate communication

both in and out of the classroom. As students begin to interact and negotiate in these places between languages and cultures, they are not only addressing their relationships with the host language and culture, but their relationships with each other. As they do so, as they begin to develop different cultural identities, a different sense of community emerges, that of an inter-national community, one in which students can build new inter-cultural skills.

The common language of English plays a critical role, of course. The words of Byram, Fleming, and Kramsch point to the valuing of language skills in English for intercultural communication.[6] Their suggestion of the 'intercultural speaker' as an appropriate model for language learners, rather than that of "the untroubled mythical native speaker"[7] provides opportunities for us as language teachers to reflect on our practices. Here, though, I want to look beyond the teaching and learning of English to the community in which our students live.

As cultural identities change, as spaces open up between cultures and languages, a new sense of community begins to form, as students move from being '*international*' students from different countries to becoming '*inter-national*' students living in the places between. Such an approach implies a different understanding of community, one of an inter-national community, a place where people from different nations, languages, and cultures learn to live and work together between languages and cultures. This idea of an inter-national community is one in which the Canadian

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[6]Michael Byram and Michael Fleming, (eds.), "Introduction," *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through Drama and Ethnography*, 8, and Claire Kramsch, "The privilege of the intercultural speaker," in Byram and Fleming, Ibid., 17.

[7]Kramsch, Ibid., 27.

students who work with international English language program students as language partners, cultural assistants, and friends are very much included. It is one, too, that includes teachers. The inter-national classroom becomes a focus of this community for students and teachers. What knowledges, skills, and attitudes are students learning in such a classroom? What are teachers learning?

This idea of a community that forms in the spaces between languages and cultures is one that suggests a different understanding of our role as teachers, of a role as inter-national educators, working with students in spaces between, helping to prepare them for life in an inter-national setting, helping them to gain an " 'intercultural communicative competence' "[8] so that they can learn to act as empowered citizens in an inter-national world. The meaning of teaching and the understanding of curriculum re-form as our own identities as educators continue to grow and change as we work with students in the places between languages and cultures.

In this understanding, the inter-national classroom/community becomes a model for the world, the inter-cultural learner becomes the model for the inter-cultural citizen, and the teacher an inter-cultural teacher, working in the middle. This is the real place we are working, the real location of our curriculum.

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[8]Byram and Fleming, Ibid., 12.

understanding the research in the context of theory

How can contemporary theory help us to better understand this research? How does this research support and address ideas raised in theory? Where does the study position itself within theory? What questions are generated, what implications are suggested for us as educators and researchers in the realm of theory? What new understandings begin to emerge?

The research supports the ideas of Stuart Hall and Ted Aoki about the ways cultural identity is discovered and constituted. The narratives of the students showed evidence of "constant transformation" and "critical points of deep and significant *difference*" as well as processes that illustrate the constituting of identity as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as being",[9] "as production, in the throes of being constituted . . . in places of difference."[10]

In researching and writing, I have tried "to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences."[11] The narratives show these "moments and the processes" that Homi Bhabha draws our attention to, as these students move back and forth between the processes of discovering an idea of a former 'existing' cultural identity and the constituting of a new one. Such an understanding focuses our gaze on more than just isolated experiences and shows instead the value

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[9]Hall, Ibid., 225.

[10]Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum," 259-60.

[11]Bhabha, Ibid., 1-2.

of the moments in identifying the processes. This affects our understanding of lived experiences and causes us to think about the processes, and hence also the activities that are taking place.

Through interviews such as these, we as teachers gain a different sense of who our students are, an understanding that in itself has implications for inquiry and for theories of language teaching and learning. The knowledge that our students are engaged in critical processes of this nature supports Aoki's approach to the lived curriculum: ". . . by listening more thoughtfully to sayings of teachers and students, (we can) become more alert to the archi-texture of curricular landscapes . . . ."[12] Here truly are "lines of movement"[13] in the curricular texture that demand our attention as teachers. What can we learn from them? What other 'lines of movement' are there? What else can we hear if we listen?

In attempting to move into the border zones where students experience life midst languages and cultures, the 'in-between spaces', I have tried to locate the words of teachers there too, as well as the work of the researcher. This I think has implications for theory, and for writing, as to work with students, teachers, texts, and experiences in this way implies and legitimates an engagement with research that is personal and subjective, not distant nor objective.

> It is apparent that to be truly involved with cultural translation, research must take on the characteristic of researching *with* people rather than researching *about* people."[14]

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[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., 260.

[14]Rita Irwin, "Roots/Routes as Arterial Connections for Art Educators: Advocating for Aboriginal Cultures," *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 18, (1998): 31, with reference

The shift of location into the boundary, into the place "from which *something begins its presencing*"[15] suggests an identification not only with the students, but with the activity that takes place there, and transforms our understanding of the roles of the educator and researcher. We need to ask questions such as these: What is the location of the study? What is the meaning of the study, not only for the students as subjects, but for the teachers as subjects, and for the researcher as subject?

While the study is concerned with curriculum, I have drawn upon the work of cultural theorists, notably Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, for inspiration and guidance as well as for theoretical grounding. The writings and works of anthropologists like James Clifford, Smadar Lavie, and Ted Swedenburg, among others, have also been very valuable, as have pieces by scholars of English literature and composition, including Rey Chow, Gary Olson, and Lynn Worsham. The experiences and insights of language educators and curriculum specialists such as Michael Byram, Michael Fleming, Claire Kramsch, William Pinar, and Paul Wadden have been important too. The thoughtful teachings of Ted Aoki, Rita Irwin, and others, as well the ideas of my fellow students and colleagues, have led me into participating in a small way in an international inter-disciplinary conversation based on postcolonial theory. This is an experience that has been very stimulating for me personally and shows the value, I think, of reaching beyond the texts of the field of education to include those of cultural studies, anthropology, and literary theory in helping to inform our understanding of curriculum.

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to Linda Alcoff, "The problem of speaking for others," *Cultural Critique*, 20(4), 5-32.

[15]Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1.

The words of Ana Barro, Shirley Jordan, and Celia Roberts support this reaching:

> Linking language learning and cultural studies together is neither easy nor comfortable. There are several reasons for this. Firstly applied linguistics and language education generally have tended to look to linguistics and psychology for their theoretical and conceptual frames, whereas anthropology, which can claim to be the discipline most closely associated with studying cultures, has been pushed to the margins. The result has been that 'culture' has not been debated in the language pedagogy literature, but has simply been inserted into language textbooks. Cultural references tend to take the form of essentialist and unreflexive statements with little sense of individual agency . . . .[16]

How can we approach this linking of language learning and cultural studies? What contributions to

our understanding of curriculum can anthropology and other disciplines of cultural theory make

from those margins? What different theoretical and conceptual frames can be suggested?

At the beginning of the chapter titled "Understanding Curriculum as International Text" in

Understanding Curriculum,[17] Bill Pinar *et al.* note the calls of "many scholars . . . for attention to

international dimensions of curriculum study . . . ."[18] While much of the chapter is devoted to

surveys of various national curricula, Pinar includes a few pages on global education. He describes

several curricular projects that focus on developing a global perspective with the object of

promoting "international understanding and cooperation . . . ."[19] In Pinar's words, "global education

aspires to provide models of this interconnectedness, interdependence, and interrelationship of

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[16]Ana Barro, Shirley Jordan, Celia Roberts, "Cultural Practice in Everyday Life: the language learner as ethnographer," in Byram and Fleming, Ibid., 77.

[17]William F. Pinar, William F. Reynolds, Patrick Slattery, Peter M. Taubman, *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 792-843.

[18]Ibid., 792.

[19]Ibid., 801.

world cultures in an educational effort to promote cooperation and progress."[20]

International understanding and cooperation are worthwhile goals, and words that speak to them now form part of our college's mission, values, and outcomes statements. I think many teachers of English as an additional language would share a belief in working towards better international understanding and cooperation. The inter-cultural, inter-national classroom that I have suggested appears to fit into this category, and could serve as such a 'model'. Yet we need to look at this kind of international perspective more closely and at what we mean by 'internationalizing'.

The global education programs that Pinar has described seem to privilege an understanding of internationalizing that is based on unity and a sense of oneness, that of a global perspective. While the idea of a global perspective is admirable, it leads to questions. How do we actually achieve this perspective? As teachers, how do we teach it? How do students learn it? In more theoretical terms, where is this idea grounded? Does it address contemporary ideas of difference? Are voices from the places of margins and borders speaking? Are they being heard?

Pinar's surveying opens spaces for new theoretical understandings in the spaces between so that we can consider different responses to those calls for attention. Can this study of cultural identities make a contribution?

An understanding of postcolonial theories of cultural identity can inform our understanding of the

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[20]Ibid.

use of terms such as internationalism. Stuart Hall draws our attention to the need "to situate the debates about identity within all those historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively 'settled' character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalization . . . ."[21] James Clifford writes of "human difference articulated in displacement, tangled cultural experiences, structures and possibilities of an increasingly connected but not homogeneous world."[22] These words speak to ideas of identity and difference, of struggles and difficulties, and chart a more realistic terrain of the work of international understanding, I think, than those which speak more simply of a unified global perspective, a perspective which could easily be seen to echo the voices of the dominant discourses and cultures.

The location of this thesis in the spaces between languages and cultures in an English language program places the research within the international postcolonial conversation around ideas of identity, difference, margins, borders, and hybridity. The idea of a different kind of inter-national community and classroom emerges from reflecting on the processes of discovering and constituting cultural identities in spaces between languages and cultures. How are we to understand this different kind of inter-national community and classroom? How is this community formed? What is this inter-national classroom based on? How can postcolonial theories of cultural identity help us in our understanding of these places between? Where are such questions located in terms of curriculum inquiry?

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[21]Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?", in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 2.

[22]James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 2.

As Ana Barro and her colleagues have noted, in the "theoretical and conceptual frames" of language education, "anthropology . . . has been pushed to the margins."[23] It is from these margins of cultural theory that this understanding of an inter-national classroom emerges and responds to those calls for "attention to international dimensions of curriculum study."[24]

An understanding of the kind of inter-cultural, inter-national classroom I am imagining relies in part on Homi Bhabha's notions of cultural difference and hybridization.

I want to note first Homi Bhabha's distinction between the ideas of cultural diversity and cultural difference:

> Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs; held in a time-frame of relativism it gives rise to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity. [25]

In light of our understanding of the processes of discovering and constituting cultural identity, the idea of "pre-given cultural contents and customs" appears limited and essentialist, and causes us to question the meaning of these familiar terms of 'cultural diversity' and 'multiculturalism'. And as we do, we begin to gain a different sense of 'internationalizing' too.

As a different approach, Bhabha offers his own concept of cultural difference:

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[23]Barro, Jordan and Roberts, Ibid.

[24]Pinar, Ibid., 801.

[25]Bhabha, Ibid., 34.

> Cultural difference is a particular constructed discourse at a time when something is being challenged about power or authority. At that point, a particular cultural trait or tradition – the smell of somebody's food, the color of their skin, the accent that they speak with, their particular history, be it Irish or Indian or Jewish – becomes the site of contestation, abuse, insult, and discrimination.[26]

It seems to me that Bhabha's idea of cultural difference provides an important focus for educators. What role can we play in those discourses? How can we influence those conversations? How can we work to encourage and achieve inter-national and inter-cultural understanding in these sites of difference?

The need for inter-national communication and understanding is critical as we step into the twenty-first century. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg note that ". . . borders, like diasporas, are not just places of imaginative interminglings and happy hybridities for us to celebrate. They are equally minefields, mobile territories of constant clashes . . . ."[27] The value of "the competence of the 'intercultural' speaker, operating at the border between several languages or language varieties, manoeuvring his/her way through the troubled waters of cross-cultural misunderstandings"[28] becomes clear. If we hope to achieve a goal of international understanding and cooperation through education, then we need to be able to deal with issues of cultural difference, and do more than just

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[26]Bhabha, "Staging the Politics of Difference: Homi Bhabha's Critical Literacy," in Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham (eds.), *Race, Rhetoric, and the Postcolonial*, 16.

[27]Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, "Introduction: Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity," in Lavie and Swedenburg (eds.), *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*, 15, with reference to Coco Fusco, "The Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo, Interview with Guillermo Gomez-Peria and Emily Hicks," *Third Text*, 7:53-76, 58.

[28]Kramsch, Ibid.

welcome and celebrate cultural diversity. An understanding of an inter-national classroom such as I have suggested may provide an opportunity to do so.

We can turn again to Homi Bhabha and his notion of hybridization to give us some understanding of the processes that take place in the discovering and constituting of identities and in the forming and re-forming of an inter-national classroom and community. Through Bhabha's frame we may be able to see how the work that takes place in such a classroom between languages and cultures could help us deal with issues of cultural difference and, in a political sense, help us to achieve international communication and understanding.

For Homi Bhabha, hybridization is an activity of cultural, social, and political interaction, and "is really about how you negotiate between texts or cultures or practices in a situation of power imbalances . . . ,"[29] where "the process of negotiation is continually placing and replacing the members of that act of cultural or social or political interaction."[30] What processes of negotiation are the students experiencing? How are those processes placing and re-placing them as they negotiate between the texts, cultures, and practices that they encounter in the spaces between languages and cultures? What are they learning here?

Bhabha sees the "process of hybridization, located in that space of "culture's 'in-between',"" as "a complex act that generates borderline affects and identifications" in the process of "articulating

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[29]Bhabha, Ibid., 39.

[30]Ibid., 19.

those social divisions and unequal developments that disturb the self-recognition of the national culture, its anointed horizons of territory and tradition."[31] Questions around issues of authority, difference, and similarity "are continually happening in the very process of discourse-making or meaning-making."[32]

What do Homi Bhabha's words suggest to us about the discourses of inter-national students in an English language program, as they articulate their experiences of social divisions and cultural differences? What recognitions of national cultures are being disturbed as identities change as they "live in places of difference"?[33] What new borderline identifications are being generated?

While Bhabha is writing of other places and times (particularly of colonial British India), his description of hybridity as "a partial and double force . . . , that disturbs the visibility of the colonial presence and makes the recognition of its authority as problematic"[34] leads me to wonder about these processes of "discourse-making or meaning-making"[35] that are happening in our inter-cultural classroom, in the 'in-between' spaces between languages and cultures. What visibilities are being disturbed there? What identities are changing? What *colonial* presences are being questioned there? What new *postcolonial* presences are forming?

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[31]Bhabha, "Culture's In-Between," in Hall and du Gay (eds.), Ibid., 54.

[32]Bhabha, "Staging the Politics of Difference," 19.

[33]Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum," 260.

[34]Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 111.

[35]Bhabha, "Staging the Politics of Difference," 19.

It seems a new sense of community may be forming in this place where identities are changing, where students are learning to negotiate with each other and with "texts, cultures. and practices."[36] This process of negotiation is critical to this understanding of the inter-national classroom as it implies that students are learning to work with differences and to communicate in spaces of difference. What implications are there for inter-national students and teachers in a classroom of difference and community, in a classroom based not on ideas of presumed identities and the recognizing of cultural diversity, but in ideas of changing identities and the negotiating of cultural differences?

This study has considered how we should understand the lived meanings and identities students discover and constitute while experiencing life midst languages and cultures in the curriculum of an English language program. The work of the researching has led me to think of the openings that emerge as students negotiate 'texts, cultures, and practices' in those spaces. Homi Bhabha's ideas have helped me to imagine the curricular landscape of an inter-national and inter-cultural classroom. What contributions do these ideas have for a different conceptual and theoretical framing of language education and for our understanding of curriculum? What implications are there for the ways we see ourselves?

Towards the end of the chapter on "Understanding Curriculum as International Text," Pinar introduces the work of Terrance Carson, David G. Smith, and John Willinsky in two sub-sections

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[36]Ibid., 39.

titled "The international classroom: Canada and the world" and "Post-colonial Curriculum?"[37]

Pinar's reporting of their research shows an alertness to different ways of answering those calls "for

attention to international dimensions of curriculum study"[38] with which he began the chapter. The

work of Carson, Smith, and Willinsky helps us in our understanding of questions of identity and

curriculum.

> Carson asks two significant questions regarding the emerging international classroom: how
> are we to respond to the cultural "other" who is already in our midst, and how will we learn
> to live humanely in a world that is in a period of transformation. This double issue of the
> globe in the classroom and the classroom in the globe reveals that the local school becomes
> a focus of international curriculum experience . . . .[39]

> David G. Smith . . . calls for an 'international narrative practice' that encourages the
> development of a curriculum where cultural stories are told internationally so that teachers
> and students can come to more clearly recognize their common global humanity.[40]

Pinar also notes John Willinsky's notion of "a *post-colonial supplement* designed to create a little

space in the curriculum for thinking about the implications of five centuries of a global

imperialism." [41] Willinsky's "first supplementary step for educators and students" is to move from

"asking 'who are they?' and 'what do they mean?' to 'who are we?' and 'what do we mean by this

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[37]Pinar, Ibid., 837-840.

[38]Ibid., 801.

[39]Ibid., 838, with reference to Terrance Carson, "The international classroom" (Paper
presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Educational Association, St. John's, New
Brunswick, September 1990.)

[40]Ibid., with reference to David G. Smith, "Pedagogy as an international narrative practice"
(Lethbridge, Alberta: University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education, unpublished manuscript.)

[41]John Willinsky, "After 1492-1992: A post-colonial supplement for the Canadian
curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 26, no. 6 (November - December 1994): 613-629,
in Pinar, Ibid., 839.

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study?' "[42]

Willinsky's questions, and Carson's, remind me of Homi Bhabha's words:

> Once the liminality of the nation-space is established, and its signifying difference is turned from the boundary 'outside' to its finitude 'within', the threat of cultural difference is no longer a problem of 'other' people. It becomes a question of otherness of the people-as-one."[43]

These ideas suggest a different kind of "international understanding and cooperation."[44]

Pinar notes the contributions of Canadian scholars in providing leadership in understanding curriculum as international text.[45] The words of educators such as Terrance Carson, David Smith, John Willinsky, and Ted Aoki help us see the value of attentive listening to the stories of our students' lived experiences and help us to understand the location of our own work as teachers and researchers.

In terms of theory, this takes us to a place from which we can consider a postcolonial understanding of an inter-cultural classroom as a site where students learn to negotiate cultural difference as they themselves are discovering, producing, and constituting their cultural identities through a process of hybridization, in a place between languages and cultures, a process and a place we can share in

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[42]Ibid., 5.

[43]Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 150.

[44]Pinar, Ibid., 801.

[45]Ibid., 839-840.

through students' stories of lived experiences, and those of our own lived experiences as educators and researchers.

understanding the research in the context of further inquiry

The writing of this thesis opens up questions and possibilities for further research. What other directions could we take? What could this work suggest to other researchers?

My interviews with the students took place during no more than a three-week period in each of their lives, at a time when they had all been studying English for at least six months in our program. When we as teachers observe changes in students, we often notice differences in language ability, in confidence, in cultural adjustment, and in intercultural communications after about a year. It would be interesting to do a study over a year or more to research how students discover and constitute cultural identities during a longer period of time. What would a longer study, perhaps one that included more student subjects, tell us about this critical process?

The relationship between language learning and confidence interests me, and the comments made by these students that speak to that relationship generate questions for further study. Taro gained tremendous confidence through his solo bicycle journey. While adventures like his are probably more than most students could handle, Taro's story points to the value of having some sort of independent project. Closer to home, Linka and Victoria gained independence and confidence partly

through their community volunteer placements. For both of them, it wasn't the language so much as the gaining of confidence. How can we help students gain confidence in language learning? What is the place of a volunteering program? Should an English language curriculum include a component of independent studies?

In this thesis I have suggested the idea of the inter-national, inter-cultural classroom as a place where students negotiate cultural differences as they are discovering, producing, and constituting cultural identity, as they live between languages and cultures. It seems to me that this opens up an exciting site of pedagogical inquiry. How can we understand this inter-cultural classroom? How can we understand its curriculum?

As I have worked between the voices of students and the voices of texts, I have begun to think of the value for students undergoing changes in cultural identity of reading and reflecting on stories. Several writers and teachers have commented on the place of literature in inter-cultural understanding, and a study of literature offers one approach to working in an inter-cultural curriculum, a place of similarities and differences.

In our conversation, Louise told me "by looking at world literature, at writing from very different cultures, (there's often a) look of recognition (when students realize) this is similar to where they come from too. They're all recognizing that this is something they're dealing with wherever they're from."

Rey Chow, writing of the teaching of Asian literature, asks the question: *"What does it mean to be*

'Asian'?" and notes "the emergence of a critical means of gauging modern Asian experience in its

essentially non-monolithic, often 'self'-contradictory, multiplicity."[46]

Homi Bhabha works with the writings of people like Nadine Gordimer, Salman Rushdie, and Toni

Morrison. He takes us to the margins and says:

> Where, once, the transmission of national traditions was the major theme of a world
> literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the
> colonized, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – may be the terrains
> of world literature."[47]

What possibilities are there here? What stories can provide meaning to students in an inter-cultural

classroom? What stories grow in the "intensive and productive . . . (lives) of cultures and individuals

(which) take place on boundaries, those margins where we begin to see ourselves both through the

eyes of others, and in the eyes of others"?[48]

The idea of the inter-cultural, inter-national classroom, a place where students negotiate cultural

differences as they are discovering, producing, constituting cultural identity, as they live between

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[46]Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention on Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 140.

[47]Bhabha, Ibid, 12.

[48]Myler Wilkinson and Linda Wlasoff-Wilkinson, (eds.), *Crossings: Voices from the Pacific Rim* (Victoria, British Columbia: The Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1996), viii, with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin, "Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff," in Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (eds.), Ver W. McGee (trans.), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 2-9.

languages and cultures, beckons this researcher. How are we to understand this inter-national classroom? How is it formed? What happens there? How can we as educators understand our work in that classroom? What can we learn about its curricular landscape? Can we hear its voice?

As we consider these questions, we can listen once more to Homi Bhabha's voice as he writes about what he calls the "Third Space of enunciations," a place where we can begin to conceptualize

> an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.[49]

understanding the research in a personal context

Throughout this process of researching and writing, I have been aware of how my own sense of identity has been changing. In the researching and writing of students' lived experiences midst languages and cultures, I began to recognize my own location in spaces between, and became attuned to changes in my own cultural identity as a student, teacher, administrator, writer, and researcher working between languages and cultures, and between the voices of students, the voices of teachers, and the voices of texts.

At times, I found myself discovering parts of my own identity that I had left along the way. As an

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[49]Bhabha, Ibid., 38.

undergraduate student in political science many years ago, I had intended to go on to graduate school, but the quantitative approach of parts of that new social science didn't call to me. The world did, though, and so I travelled, gaining an understanding of other countries, other cultures, and of my own. Nearly thirty years later, in some of the courses for this degree, I found the stimulation and excitement that I had always hoped would be in graduate school. One day I discovered in our course readings the names and work of two of my former political science professors, and I felt part of that community again.

As a student in a teacher education program, I often felt myself to be in the wrong place, but when in the writing of this thesis I recalled the learning and teaching I had done with a very thoughtful teacher in a small community, I remembered feeling 'the call of teaching' in that rural classroom. The confidence that teacher and her students gave me was critical, in my becoming as a teacher, and it has stayed with me ever since.

My travels, most recently in Asia, have provided personal experiences that allowed me to feel some of the pleasures and tensions of being between cultures, experiences that helped open my sensitivity to the lives of our students. A part of this paper came from one such experience, and in writing about it, I learned something about the meaning of cultural identity, and something about the value of reflecting and of writing. This thesis carries that lesson too.

In being there, on the island, over a very short time, the inter-personal encounters, as brief and as everyday as they were – and that may account for their intensity – made a strong impression on me, at a time when I was without my usual identity, more impressionable perhaps. That impression was like a print in the developing tank, the shades, the outline being formed,

the spaces in forming.[50]

I first started to work between texts and stories of lived experiences when I did some research for a paper on curriculum. In trying to learn about teaching and learning English, I learned something about the ways students experience life in the spaces between languages and cultures, experiences that seemed to echo Homi Bhabha's words about identity. Those words and the experience of writing that paper became another inspiration for this thesis.

The program in which I teach and work is a successful one. Every day we watch as many students learn not only language skills, but intercultural skills. At critical times in their lives, they are engaging in critical work. In writing and researching, I have learned the meaning and the value of reflecting on practice.

In the community college system, we sometimes say that we focus on teaching. Through the process of studying and writing and researching, I began to recognize the absence of research in our conversations and our work. We often say that we don't have time for anything more. I was fortunate in being able to find and make some time for researching.

This experience has introduced me to discourses and concepts of which I previously had little awareness. Overwhelmed at first, I had to try to work in this new culture and language, try to make meaning of that which I didn't understand. As I moved gradually into participating, I felt myself

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[50]John Armstrong, "Shodoshima Wind: A Stranger Travelling in Japan," 7.

'becoming', constituting a new identity, "in the throes of being constituted as we live in places of difference."[51] Now in a small way I have entered into a postcolonial conversation, and I speak with a new voice.

This thesis has given me the opportunity to write, something I have always loved. I learned from the writings of others and put down words of my own.

I live in the mountains, and in thinking about this process of thesis researching and writing, I have used the metaphor of the mountains. I have thought in terms of moving along peaks and ridges, climbing up steep slopes where I couldn't stop, getting stuck in dense bush and misty creek valleys where I couldn't see my way, finding myself in plateaus where I stopped and rested, coming upon openings in the forest where I took pleasure in the exhilaration of the view. Here I stop and write for a bit while I get ready for the last parts of the climb.

In terms of the theoretical discourses of the time, I have become aware of the privileging of presence, of the missing voices of the absent. I have learned to question, learned of metanarratives, learned of deconstruction, learned to think in different ways, learned so much. The discourses of postcolonialism pull me along, in a curricular conversation with the voices of anthropology and cultural theory. Where will we go with this conversation? I want to travel with James Clifford and talk with Ien Ang and John Stratton about the meaning of postcolonialism in Asia. I want to listen to Stuart Hall's voice. I want to go to Chicago and sit in on a seminar with Homi Bhabha. I want to

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[51]Aoki, "Legitimating Lived Curriculum." 260.

ask Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg about their idea of a "third time-space."[52] I want to sit at the table with Ted Aoki at the café on Bourbon Street.[53] There are many, many conversations. What other voices will we hear as we talk and listen?

When I started writing I tried to separate my roles. In my journal I reminded myself to remember what I was doing, to whom I was speaking, and for what purpose. It was good self-advice, I'm sure, but as I worked with texts, students, teachers, other students, my teachers, I found everything coming back to the same place, and so I realized there were no separations, just differences. I have learned an awareness of differences, learned to pay attention to those metonymic moments, learned to seek those places between.

I want to try to encourage others to study and to join this conversation. In doing so I would try to offer them the support, suggest the questions, and give them the praise that my teachers and colleagues have given me, and hope that their confidence in their own work and their own abilities would grow, as mine has.

My writing happened as I worked between the stories of the students and the texts of theory. As I read, I made notes, and as I typed my notes, ideas came, and I wrote those in too. And as I listened to the narratives, ideas came, and became part of the transcripts. In this space where I worked, ideas emerged and joined in conversations with others, became themes, and found space on screen and

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[52]Lavie and Swedenburg, Ibid., 16.

[53]Aoki, Ibid., 256.

paper.

When I first started interpreting the conversations of the students, I found one or two themes, and followed them, but perhaps held back, still shy, like the students. Later, in my journal I wrote of a "fountaining of ideas" that seemed to come one after the other. Often, after I "finished" writing for the day, these ideas, these metonymic ties would appear. And so I wrote more.

As I wrote I tried to be aware of my readers – my advisors, fellow students, fellow teachers. I wanted to try to make the text readable and interesting. I hope I have succeeded, and I hope someone else will find something in my work to think about, to question, to build on, as I have with the work of others.

I also wanted to make the text readable for the students, for Linka, Taro, and Victoria, who gave me so much as they carried on with their lives in these spaces between languages and cultures, about which they know so much, and which they are just beginning to express.

These are some of the ideas of what this experience of writing and researching has meant to me.

As I have worked between the stories and narratives of students and teachers and the voices and texts of theory, ideas have emerged, passing reflections have taken shape, themes have appeared, waiting to be written. I am intrigued by Homi Bhabha's chapter heading, "How newness enters the world"[54] and wonder if this working in places between is one of the ways.

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[54]Bhabha, Ibid., 212.

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