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Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning[*]

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The author argues that second language acquisition (SLA) theorists have struggled to conceptualize the relationship between the language learner and the social world because they have not developed a comprehensive theory of social identity which integrates the language learner and the language learning context. She also maintains that SLA theorists have not adequately addressed how relations of power affect interaction between language learners and target language speakers. Using data collected in Canada from January to December 1991 from diaries, questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and home visits, the author illustrates how and under what conditions the immigrant women in her study created, responded to, and sometimes resisted opportunities to speak English. Drawing on her data analysis as well as her reading in social theory, the author argues that current conceptions of *the individual* in SLA theory need to be reconceptualized, and she draws on the poststructuralist conception of social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change to explain the findings from her study. Further, she argues for a conception of *investment* rather than *motivation* to capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it. The notion of investment conceives of the language learner, not as ahistorical and unidimensional, but as having a complex social history and multiple desires. The article includes a discussion of the implications of the study for classroom teaching and current theories of communicative competence.

> Everybody working with me is Canadian. When I started to work there, they couldn't understand that it might be difficult for me to understand everything and know about everything what it's normal for them. To explain it more clearly I can write an

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example, which happened few days ago. The girl [Gail] which is working with me pointed at the man and said:
"Do you see him?"—I said
"Yes, Why?"
"Don't you know him?"
"No. I don't know him."
"How come you don't know him. Don't you watch TV. That's Bart Simpson."
It made me feel so bad and I didn't answer her nothing. Until now I don't know why this person was important.

Eva, February 8, 1991[1]

No researcher today would dispute that language learning results from participation in communicative events. Despite any claims to the contrary, however, the nature of this learning remains undefined.

Savignon, 1991, p. 271

How would second language acquisition (SLA) theorists conceptualize the relationship between Eva, an immigrant language learner, and Gail, an anglophone Canadian, both of whom are located in the same North American workplace in the 1990s? Because they have struggled to conceptualize the relationship between the individual language learner and larger social processes, a question such as this poses a problem for SLA theorists. In general, many SLA theorists have drawn artificial distinctions between the language learner and the language learning context. On the one hand, *the individual* is described with respect to a host of affective variables such as his/her motivation to learn a second language. Krashen (1981, 1982), for example, has hypothesized that *comprehensible input* in the presence of a low *affective filter* is the major causal variable in SLA. In Krashen's view, this affective filter comprises the learner's motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety state—all of which are variables that pertain to the individual rather than the social context. Furthermore, the personality of the individual has been described unidimensionally as introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, field dependent or field independent.[2] With reference to these theories, Eva might be described as someone who is unmotivated with a high affective filter; perhaps an introverted personality who is unable to interact appropriately with her interlocutors. Or she might be portrayed as a poor language learner who has not developed sociolinguistic competence.

[1]Quoted in Peirce, 1993, p. 197. Eva explained that the man her co-worker pointed to had a "Bart Simpson" t-shirt on. Spelling mistakes in the original have been corrected.
[2]See Brown (1987) for an overview of the literature on personality variables and language learning.

Other theories of SLA focus on social rather than individual variables in language learning. The *social* frequently refers to group differences between the language learner group and the target language group (Schumann, 1976). In this view, where there is congruence between the second language group and the target language group, what Schumann (1976) terms *social distance* between them is considered to be minimal, in turn facilitating the acculturation of the second language group into the target language group and enhanced language learning. Where there is great social distance between two groups, little acculturation is considered to take place, and the theory predicts that members of the second language group will not become proficient speakers of the target language. Supporters of the Acculturation Model of SLA (Schumann, 1978) might argue that despite the fact that Eva and Gail are in contact, there is great social distance between them because there is little congruence between Eva's culture and that of Gail. For this reason, Eva might struggle to interact successfully with members of the target language community.

Because of the dichotomous distinctions between the language learner and the social world, there are disagreements in the literature on the way affective variables interact with the larger social context. For example, although Krashen regards motivation as a variable independent of social context, Spolsky (1989) regards the two as inextricably intertwined. Although Krashen draws distinctions between self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety, Clement, Gardner, and Smythe (quoted in Spolsky, 1989) consider motivation and anxiety as a subset of self-confidence. Although Krashen considers self-confidence as an intrinsic characteristic of the language learner, Gardner (1985) argues that self-confidence arises from positive experiences in the context of the second language: "Self-confidence . . . develops as a result of positive experiences in the context of the second language and serves to motivate individuals to learn the second language" (p. 54).

Such disagreements in the SLA literature should not be dismissed, as Gardner (1989) dismisses them, as "more superficial than real" (p. 137). I suggest that this confusion arises because artificial distinctions are drawn between the individual and the social, which lead to arbitrary mapping of particular factors on either the individual or the social, with little rigorous justification. In the field of SLA, theorists have not adequately addressed why it is that a learner may sometimes be motivated, extroverted, and confident and sometimes unmotivated, introverted, and anxious; why in one place there may be social distance between a specific group of language learners and the target language community, whereas in another place the social distance may be minimal; why a learner can sometimes speak and other times remains silent. Although muted, there is an uneasy recognition by some theorists that

current theory about the relationship between the language learner and the social world is problematic. Scovel (1978) for example, has found that research on foreign language anxiety suffers from several ambiguities, and Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) remain unconvinced of the relationship between "personality variables" (p. 9) and language achievement.

The central argument of this paper is that SLA theorists have not developed a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context. Furthermore, they have not questioned how relations of power in the social world affect social interaction between second language learners and target language speakers. Although many SLA theorists (Ellis, 1985; Krashen, 1981; Schumann, 1978; Spolsky, 1989; Stern, 1983) recognize that language learners do not live in idealized, homogeneous communities but in complex, heterogeneous ones, such heterogeneity has been framed uncritically. Theories of the good language learner have been developed on the premise that language learners can choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target language community and that the language learner's access to the target language community is a function of the learner's motivation. Thus Gardner and MacIntyre (1992), for example, argue that "the major characteristic of the informal context is that it is voluntary. Individuals can either participate or not in informal acquisition contexts" (p. 213). SLA theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities L2 learners have to practice the target language outside the classroom. In addition, many have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual.

Drawing on a recent study (Peirce, 1993) as well as my reading in social theory, I will propose a theory of social identity that I hope will contribute to debates on second language learning. This theory of social identity, informed by my data, assumes that power relations play a crucial role in social interactions between language learners and target language speakers. In March 1991, for example, when I asked Eva why the communication breakdown between her and Gail had taken place, Eva indicated she had felt humiliated at the time. She said that she could not respond to Gail because she had been positioned as a "strange woman." What had made Eva feel strange? When I analyzed Eva's data more closely, I realized that Gail's questions to Eva were in fact rhetorical. Gail did not expect, or possibly even desire a

response from Eva: "How come you don't know him. Don't you watch TV. That's Bart Simpson." It was Gail and not Eva who could determine the grounds on which interaction could proceed; it was Gail and not Eva who had the power to bring closure to the conversation. If, as Savignon (1991) argues, language learning results from participation in communicative events, it is important to investigate how power relations are implicated in the nature of this learning.

I therefore take the position that notions of the individual and the language learner's personality in SLA theory need to be reconceptualized in ways that will problematize dichotomous distinctions between the language learner and the language learning context. I argue that SLA theory needs to develop a conception of the language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction. In taking this position, I foreground the role of language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's social identity. It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through language that a person gains access to—or is denied access to—powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak (Heller, 1987). Thus language is not conceived of as a neutral medium of communication but is understood with reference to its social meaning. I support these arguments with findings from a longitudinal case study of the language learning experiences of a group of immigrant women in Canada (Peirce, 1993).

THE STUDY: IMMIGRANT WOMEN AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS

From January to June 1990 I helped teach a 6-month ESL course to a group of recent immigrants at Ontario College in Newtown, Canada.[3] After the course was complete, I invited the learners to participate in a longitudinal case study of their language learning experiences in Canada. Five women agreed to participate in the study: Mai from Vietnam, Eva and Katarina from Poland, Martina from Czechoslovakia, and Felicia from Peru. My research questions were divided into two parts:

Part I

How are the opportunities for immigrant women in Canada to practice ESL socially structured outside the classroom? How do immigrant women

[3]The names of places and participants have been changed to protect the identities of participants.

respond to and act upon these social structures to create, use, or resist opportunities to practice English? To what extent should their actions be understood with reference to their investment in English and their changing social identities across time and space?

Part II

How can an enhanced understanding of natural language learning and social identity inform SLA theory, in general, as well as ESL pedagogy for immigrant women in Canada? (Peirce, 1993, p. 18)

The study lasted 12 months—from January to December 1991. A major source of data collection was a diary study: From January to June 1991, the participants kept records of their interactions with anglophone Canadians and used diaries to reflect on their language learning experiences in the home, workplace, and community. During the course of the study, we met on a regular basis to share some of the entries the women had made in their diaries and to discuss their insights and concerns. I also drew a substantial amount of data from two detailed questionnaires I administered before and after the study, as well as personal and group interviews, and home visits.

One of the assumptions on which I based my research questions was that practice in the target language is a necessary condition of second language learning. As Spolsky (1989) argues, extensive exposure to the target language, in relevant kinds and amounts, and the opportunity to practice the target language are essential for second language learning: Learning cannot proceed without exposure and practice. These conditions, furthermore, are graded: The more exposure and practice, the more proficient the learner will become. Spolsky (1989) argues that the language learner can have exposure to and practice in the target language in two qualitatively different settings: the natural or informal environment of the target language community or the formal environment of the classroom. The focus of my research was on the natural language learning experiences of the women in their homes, workplaces, and communities.

THE THEORY: SOCIAL IDENTITY, INVESTMENT, AND THE RIGHT TO SPEAK

Social Identity as Multiple, a Site of Struggle, and Changing Over Time

In examining the relationship between the language learners in my study and the social worlds in which they lived, I drew in particular on

Weedon's (1987) conception of social identity or subjectivity. Feminist poststructuralism, like much postmodern educational theory (Cherryholmes, 1988; Giroux, 1988; Simon, 1992), explores how prevailing power relations between individuals, groups, and communities affect the life chances of individuals at a given time and place. Weedon's work, however, is distinguished from that of other postmodern theorists in the rigorous and comprehensive way in which her work links individual experience and social power in a theory of subjectivity. Weedon (1987) defines subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32). Furthermore, like other poststructuralist theorists who inform her work (Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Althusser, and Foucault), Weedon does not neglect the central role of language in her analysis of the relationship between the individual and the social: "Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21).

Three defining characteristics of subjectivity, as outlined by Weedon, are particularly important for understanding my data: the multiple nature of the subject; subjectivity as a site of struggle; and subjectivity as changing over time. First, Weedon (1987) argues, the terms *subject* and *subjectivity* signify a different conception of the individual from that associated with humanist conceptions of the individual dominant in Western philosophy. Whereas humanist conceptions of the individual—and most definitions of the individual in SLA research—presuppose that every person has an essential, unique, fixed, and coherent core (introvert/extrovert; motivated/unmotivated; field dependent/field independent), poststructuralism depicts the individual as diverse, contradictory, and dynamic; multiple rather than unitary, decentered rather than centered. By way of example (and at the risk of oversimplification) a humanist might be attracted by a book with the title *How to Discover Your True Self*. A poststructuralist, on the other hand, might prefer a book titled *It's OK to Live with Contradictions*.

Second, the conception of social identity as a site of struggle is an extension of the position that social identity is multiple and contradictory. Subjectivity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power in which the person takes up different subject positions—teacher, mother, manager, critic—some positions of which may be in conflict with others. In addition, the subject is not conceived of as passive; he/she is conceived of as both subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community, and society: The subject has human agency. Thus the subject positions that a person takes up within a particular discourse

are open to argument: Although a person may be positioned in a particular way within a given discourse, the person might resist the subject position or even set up a counterdiscourse which positions the person in a powerful rather than marginalized subject position. Third, in arguing that subjectivity is multiple, contradictory, and a site of struggle, feminist poststructuralism highlights the changing quality of a person's social identity. As Weedon (1987) argues, "the political significance of decentering the subject and abandoning the belief in essential subjectivity is that it opens up subjectivity to change" (p. 33). This is a crucial point for second language educators in that it opens up possibilities for educational intervention.

I will demonstrate below that although it might be tempting to argue that Eva was essentially an introverted language learner, the data which follows provides convincing evidence that Eva's social identity was not fixed; it was a site of struggle and changed dramatically over time—as did her interactions with anglophone Canadians. At the time of the Bart Simpson exchange, however, Gail was in a powerful subject position and Eva did not actively resist being positioned as "strange." Because of the construction of Eva's social identity in Canada as immigrant, the social meaning of Gail's words to her were understood by Eva in this context. Had Eva been, for example, an anglophone Canadian who endorsed public rather than commercial television, she could have set up a counterdiscourse to Gail's utterance, challenging Gail's interest in popular culture. However, because of the unequal relations of power between Gail and Eva at that point in time, it was Gail who was subject *of* the discourse on Bart Simpson; Eva remained subject *to* this discourse. Thus while Eva had been offered the opportunity to engage in social interaction, to "practice" her English, her subject position within the larger discourse of which she and Gail were a part undermined this opportunity: "It made me feel so bad and I didn't answer her nothing." This discourse must be understood not only in relation to the words that were said, but in relationship to larger structures within the workplace, and Canadian society at large, in which immigrant language learners often struggle for acceptance in Canadian society.

From Motivation to Investment

A logical extension of reconceptualizing notions of the individual in SLA theory is the need to problematize the concept of motivation. In the field of second language learning, the concept of motivation is drawn primarily from the field of social psychology, where attempts have been made to quantify a learner's commitment to learning the target language. The work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gard-

ner (1985) has been particularly influential in introducing the notions of *instrumental* and *integrative* motivation into the field of SLA. In their work, instrumental motivation references the desire that language learners have to learn a second language for utilitarian purposes, such as employment, whereas integrative motivation references the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully with the target language community.

Such conceptions of motivation, which are dominant in the field of SLA, do not capture the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning that I have been investigating in my study of immigrant women. In my view, the conception of investment rather than motivation more accurately signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of the women to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. My conception of investment has been informed by my reading in social theory, although I have not as yet found a comprehensive discussion of the term in these contexts. It is best understood with reference to the economic metaphors that Bourdieu (1977) uses in his work—in particular the notion of *cultural capital.* Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) use the term cultural capital to reference the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms. They argue that some forms of cultural capital have a higher exchange value than others in a given social context. I take the position that if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources,[4] which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners will expect or hope to have a good return on that investment—a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources. Furthermore, drawing on Ogbu (1978), I take the position that this return on investment must be seen as commensurate with the effort expended on learning the second language.

It is important to note that the notion of investment I am advocating is not equivalent to instrumental motivation. The conception of instrumental motivation generally presupposes a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are the privilege of target language speakers. In this view, motivation is a property of the language learner—a fixed personality trait. The notion of investment, on the other hand, attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. It conceives of the language learner as having a complex social identity

[4]By *symbolic resources* I refer to such resources as language, education, and friendship, whereas I use the term *material resources* to include capital goods, real estate, and money.

and multiple desires. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space.

Communicative Competence and the Right to Speak

Given the position that communication and social interaction are implicated in the construction of a language learner's social identity, my research on immigrant women in Canada develops questions I have raised in earlier research (Peirce, 1989) about the way Hymes' (1971) views on communicative competence have been taken up by many theorists in the field of second language learning over the past 15 years. I have argued (Peirce, 1989) that although it is important for language learners to understand the rules of use of the target language, it is equally important for them to explore whose interests these rules serve. What is considered appropriate usage is not self-evident but must be understood with reference to relations of power between interlocutors. I take the position that theories of communicative competence in the field of second language learning should extend beyond an understanding of the appropriate rules of use in a particular society, to include an understanding of the way rules of use are socially and historically constructed to support the interests of a dominant group within a given society. Drawing on Bourdieu (1977), I argue in this paper that the definition of competence should include an awareness of the right to speak—what Bourdieu calls "the power to impose reception" (p. 75). His position is that the linguist takes for granted the conditions for the establishment of communication: that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak. However, as Bourdieu argues, it is precisely such assumptions that must be called into question.

THE ANALYSIS: IDENTITY, INVESTMENT, AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Although the findings from my study are extensive (Peirce, 1993), I wish to highlight data that address the question, How can an enhanced understanding of natural language learning and social identity inform SLA theory? First, I will address how the notion of investment helps

explain the contradictions between the women's motivation to learn English and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it. Second, I highlight data from two of the participants—Martina and Eva—to analyze the relationship between investment, social identity, and language learning.

Investment and Social Identity

All the participants in the study were highly motivated to learn English. They all took extra courses to learn English; they all participated in the diary study; they all wished to have more social contact with anglophone Canadians; and all of them, except Martina, indicated that they felt comfortable speaking English to friends or people they knew well. It is significant, however, that all the women felt uncomfortable talking to people in whom they had a particular symbolic or material investment. Eva, who came to Canada for "economical advantage",[5] and was eager to work with anglophones, practice her English and get better jobs, was silenced when the customers in her workplace made comments about her accent. Mai, who came to Canada for her life in the future and depended on the wishes of management for her job security and financial independence, was most uncomfortable speaking to her boss. Katarina, who came to Canada to escape a communist and atheistic system, and had a great affective investment in her status as a professional, felt most uncomfortable talking to her teacher, the doctor, and other anglophone professionals. Martina, who had given up a surveyor's job to come to Canada "for the children," was frustrated and uncomfortable when she could not defend her family's rights in the public world. Felicia, who had come to Canada to escape "terrorism," and had great affective investment in her Peruvian identity, felt most uncomfortable speaking English in front of Peruvians who speak English fluently.

The concept of motivation as currently taken up in the SLA literature conceives of the language learner as having a unified, coherent identity which organizes the type and intensity of a language learner's motivation. The data indicate that motivation is a much more complex matter than hitherto conceived. Despite being highly motivated, there were particular social conditions under which the women in my study were most uncomfortable and unlikely to speak (See also Auerbach & McGrail, 1991; Cumming & Gill, 1992; Goldstein, 1991; Peirce, Harper, & Burnaby, 1993; Rockhill, 1987). The data suggest that a language learner's motivation to speak is mediated by investments

[5]The only alterations that have been made to the written contributions of the participants are spelling corrections.

that may conflict with the desire to speak. Paradoxically, perhaps, the decision to remain silent or the decision to speak may both constitute forms of resistance to inequitable social forces. For example, although Felicia resisted speaking English in front of strangers because she did not want to be identified as an immigrant in Canada, other immigrant language learners are anxious to speak English for the express purpose of resisting unscrupulous social practices. For example, in his Toronto-based study of Spanish-speaking immigrants, Klassen (1987) found that some language learners wanted to learn English as a means of defence in their daily lives. An understanding of motivation should therefore be mediated by an understanding of learners' investments in the target language—investments that are closely connected to the ongoing production of a language learner's social identity. This position will be defended more comprehensively in the following discussion of Martina and Eva's experiences of learning English in Canada. In the following discussion, I demonstrate how the conception of social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change helps to explain the conditions under which Martina and Eva spoke or remained silent.

Martina: Social identity as Multiple and a Site of Struggle

Martina was born in Czechoslovakia in 1952. She came to Canada in March 1989 when she was 37 years old, with her husband Petr and their three children (Jana 17, Elsbet 14, Milos 11 at the time). She came to Canada for a "better life for children." Neither she nor her husband knew any English before they came to Canada, but her children had received some English language training in Austria where the family had spent 19 months waiting for Canadian visas. Although Martina had a professional degree as a surveyor, she worked as a "cook help" at a restaurant, Fast Foods, before she started the ESL course in January 1990.

Initially, Martina was dependent on her children to perform the public and domestic tasks of settling into a new country. When Martina went looking for a job, she took her eldest daughter with her, even though her daughter would become distressed because nobody wanted to employ her mother. When Martina wanted to help serve customers at Fast Foods, she asked her daughters to tell her what words to use. As Martina's English improved, she took on more of the parental tasks in the home. Many of Martina's diary entries describe the way that she used English to perform a wide variety of tasks in the home and community. It was Martina rather than her husband Petr who did most of the organization in the family, like finding accommodations, organizing telephones, buying appliances, finding schools for the chil-

dren. Martina also helped her husband to perform public tasks in English. When Petr was laid off work, he relied on Martina to help him get unemployment insurance and he asked Martina to help him prepare for his plumber's certificate by translating the preparation book from English to Czech.

I wish to argue that Martina's investment in English was largely structured by an identity as primary caregiver in the family. It was important that she learn English so that she could take over the parental tasks of the home from her children. The very reason why Martina and Petr came to Canada was to find a "better life for children." Martina was anxious not to jeopardize the children's future by having them take on more public and domestic tasks than were absolutely necessary. Furthermore, because Martina had the responsibility for dealing with the public world, she was also anxious to understand the Canadian way of life—how things get done in Canadian society.

The poststructuralist view that social identity is nonunitary and contradictory helps to explain how Martina responded to and created opportunities to practice English. To illustrate this point, I will address some of the multiple sites of Martina's identity formation: She was an immigrant, a mother, a language learner, a worker, a wife. As a socially constructed immigrant woman (Ng, 1987; Boyd, 1992), Martina never felt comfortable speaking. Despite the fact that Martina showed remarkable resourcefulness and progress in her language learning, she frequently referred to herself as "stupid" and "inferior" because she could not speak English fluently. As she wrote in December 1991:

> 1. I feel uncomfortable using English in the group of people whose English language is their mother tongue because they speak fluently without any problems and I feel inferior.

Significantly, however, despite feelings of inferiority and shame, despite what could be described as a high affective filter, Martina refused to be silenced. I suggest that the reasons why Martina refused to be silenced were because her social identity as a mother and primary caregiver in the home led her to challenge what she understood to be appropriate rules of use governing interactions between anglophone Canadians and immigrant language learners. The multiple sites of identity formation explain the surprises in Martina's data—occasions when Martina would speak despite the fact that she was not a "legitimate speaker" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 650) in the particular discourse. To mention only two occasions: First, Martina surprised her children (and no doubt her landlord and herself) by entering into a long conversation with her landlord on the phone in which she insisted that her family had not broken their lease agreement. In her diary of March 8, 1991, she wrote:

2. The first time I was very nervous and afraid to talk on the phone. When the phone rang, everybody in my family was busy, and my daughter had to answer it. After ESL course when we moved and our landlords tried to persuade me that we have to pay for whole year, I got upset and I talked with him on the phone over one hour and I didn't think about the tenses rules. I had known that I couldn't give up. My children were very surprised when they heard me.

Second, Martina surprised customers at Fast Foods (who looked at her strangely) and co-workers (who were surprised, but said nothing) by taking the initiative to serve the customers while the other workers were playing a video game in the manager's office. Consider the following entry from her diary on March 7, 1991.

3. My experiences with young Canadians were very bad, maybe I didn't have fortune. Usually I worked only with my manager, but when was P.A. day or some holidays for students, the manager stayed in his office and I worked with some students. Very often I worked with two sisters Jennifer (12 years) and Vicky (15 years) and the assistant manager who was at a cash [register]. These two girls loved talking but not with me. Even though I was very busy, they talked with young customers and laughed and sometime looked at me. I didn't know, if they laughed at me or not. When we didn't have any customers, they went to the manager office and tried to help the manager with "wheel of fortune" on the computer. Later when some customers came in and I called these girls, they went but they made faces. I felt bad and I wanted to avoid this situation. In the evening I asked my daughter what I have to tell the customer. She answered me "May I help you" then "pardon" and "something else." When I tried first time to talk to two customers alone, they looked at me strangely, but I didn't give up. I gave them everything they wanted and then I went looking for the girls and I told them as usually only "cash." They were surprised but they didn't say anything.

I suggest that Martina's perseverance with speaking ("I couldn't give up," "I didn't give up") and her courage to resist marginalization intersect with her social identity as a mother in two ways. First, as a primary caregiver, she could not rely on her husband to deal with the public world and defend the family's rights against unscrupulous social practices. Martina had to do this herself, regardless of her command of the English tense system, the strange looks she received from her interlocutors, and her feelings of inferiority. Second, Martina drew on her symbolic resources as a mother to reframe the power relations between herself and her co-workers. Thus, instead of conceding to their power as legitimate speakers of English, she reframed their relationship as a domestic one in which, as children they had no authority over her, as a parent. Consider the following extract taken from an interview with Martina on March 17, 1991:

4. In restaurant was working a lot of children, but the children always thought that I am—I don't know—maybe some broom or something. They always said "Go and clean the living room." And I was washing the dishes and they didn't do nothing. They talked to each other and they thought that I had to do everything. And I said "No." The girl is only 12 years old. She is younger than my son. I said "No, you are doing nothing. You can go and clean the tables or something."

Martina's social identity was a site of struggle. By setting up a counterdiscourse in her workplace and resisting the subject position immigrant woman in favor of the subject position mother, Martina claimed the right to speak. It is precisely this ability to claim the right to speak that I suggest should be an integral part of an expanded notion of communicative competence.

Eva: Social Identity as Changing Over Time

Eva was born in Poland in 1967 and came to Canada as a refugee in 1989 when she was 22 years old. She immigrated because she wanted "economical advantage." Eva had finished high school and worked as a bartender before she left Poland. She chose to come to Canada because it is one of the few industrialized countries that encourages immigration. She came alone, with no family or friends, but did know one person in Newtown before she arrived. Before Eva came to Canada, she spent 2 years in Italy where she became fluent in Italian. She knew no English before she arrived in Canada.

When Eva arrived in Newtown, she found employment at what she calls "The Italian store" which is situated in the heart of an established Italian neighborhood in Newtown. Eva herself lived in this neighborhood, as do many recent immigrants to Newtown. Eva was given the job at the Italian store because she was a fluent speaker of Italian. Eva was happy at the Italian store but was concerned because she wanted to learn English and had little opportunity to practice English while working in this store. After she finished the ESL course in June 1990, she began looking for another job in earnest, at a place where she could become a more proficient speaker of English. She found employment at a restaurant in Newtown called Munchies, where she was the only employee who could not speak English fluently. Eva was a full-time employee whose main job was to clean the store and prepare the food for cooking.

The conception of social identity as subject to change helps explain the way Eva over time responded to and created opportunities to practice English in her workplace. The central point I wish to make here is that it was only over time that Eva's conception of herself as an immigrant—an "illegitimate" speaker of English—changed to a

conception of herself as a multicultural citizen with the power to impose reception. When Eva first started working at Munchies, she did not think it was appropriate for her to approach her co-workers and attempt to engage them in conversation. As she said in an interview on March 7, 1991,

5. When I see that I have to do everything and nobody cares about me because—then how can I talk to them? I hear they doesn't care about me and I don't feel to go and smile and talk to them.

Note that Eva does not complete a crucial part of her sentence. "Nobody cares about me because—." The data suggest that nobody acknowledged Eva because she had the subject position immigrant in the workplace: As Eva put it, she was someone who was not fluent in English; she was "not Canadian," she was "stupid," she had "the worst type of work" in the store. To speak under such conditions would have constituted what Bourdieu (1977) calls *heretical usage* (p. 672). Eva accepted the subject position immigrant; she accepted that she was not a legitimate speaker of English and that she could not command reception of her interlocutors. As she herself said, when she first arrived in Canada, she assumed that if people treated her with disrespect, it was because of her own limitations. She conceded to these rules of use in her workplace, rules that Eva herself accepted described as normal. As she said in an interview on January 23, 1991,

6. I think because when I didn't talk to them, and they didn't ask me, maybe they think I'm just like—because I had to do the worst type of work there. It's normal.

As Eva's sense of who she was, and how she related to the social world began to change, she started to challenge her subject position in the workplace as an illegitimate speaker of English. An extract from an interview on January 23, 1991, indicates how Eva claimed spaces in conversations with co-workers. Her purpose was to introduce her own history and experiences into the workplace in the hope that her symbolic resources would be validated. This surprised her co-workers.

7. (*B* refers to Bonny and *E* refers to Eva.)
B: You were saying Eva that you are starting to speak to other people? The other people who work [at Munchies]?
E: Ya. Because before—
B: Is everybody there Canadian?
E: Ya. Because there everybody is Canadian and they would speak to each other, not to me—because—I always was like—they sent me off to do something else. I felt bad. Now it's still the same but I have to do something. I try to speak.
B: How are you doing that?

E: For example, we have a half-hour break. Sometimes—I try to speak. For example, they talk about Canada, what they like here, the places which they like—
B: Like to visit? Vacations?
E: Ya. Then I started to talk to them about how life is in Europe. Then they started to ask me some questions. But it's still hard because I cannot explain to them how things, like—
B: How do you actually find an opportunity in the conversation to say something. Like, if they're talking to each other, do you stop them?
E: No.
B: You wait for a quiet--Then what do you say?
E: No. I don't wait for when they are completely quiet, but when it's the moment I can say something about what they are talking about.
B: When you started doing that, were they surprised?
E: A little bit.

As Eva continued to develop what I have called an identity as a multicultural citizen, she developed with it an awareness of her right to speak. If people treated her with disrespect, it was their problem and not her problem. Thus when, after a year's experience in the workplace, a male customer said to her in February 1992,[6] "Are you putting on this accent so that you can get more tips?" Eva had been angry, rather than ashamed; she had spoken out, rather than been silenced. When she said to him, "I wish I did not have this accent because then I would not have to listen to such comments," she was claiming the right to speak as a multicultural citizen of Canada. Over time, then, Eva's communicative competence developed to include an awareness of how to challenge and transform social practices of marginalization.

THE IMPLICATIONS: CLASSROOM-BASED SOCIAL RESEARCH

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to offer a comprehensive analysis of ways in which my research might inform second language teaching, I take in good faith Savignon's (1991) comment that communicative language teaching looks to further language acquisition research to inform its development. I have argued thus far that SLA theorists have struggled to define the nature of language learning because they have drawn artificial distinctions between the individual language learner and larger, frequently inequitable social structures. I have drawn on Martina and Eva's data to argue that the individual language learner is not ahistorical and unidimensional but has a complex and sometimes

[6]Although the diary study was officially over by February 1992, I continued to maintain contact with the participants.

contradictory social identity, changing across time and space. I have drawn on my data to argue that motivation is not a fixed personality trait but must be understood with reference to social relations of power that create the possibilities for language learners to speak. I have suggested that even when learners have a high affective filter, it is their investment in the target language that will lead them to speak. This investment, in turn, must be understood in relation to the multiple, changing, and contradictory identities of language learners.

An important implication of my study is that the second language teacher needs to help language learners claim the right to speak outside the classroom. To this end, the lived experiences and social identities of language learners need to be incorporated into the formal second language curriculum. The data indicates, however, that students' social identities are complex, multiple, and subject to change. What kind of pedagogy, then, might help learners claim the right to speak? Drawing on insights from my research project in general and the diary study in particular (see Peirce, 1994), as well as a wide range of classroom research (e.g., Auerbach, 1989; Cummins, 1994; Heath, 1983, 1993; Heller & Barker, 1988; Morgan, 1992; Stein & Janks, 1992; Stein & Pierce, in press), I suggest that what I call *classroom-based social research* might engage the social identities of students in ways that will improve their language learning outside the classroom and help them claim the right to speak. It may help students understand how opportunities to speak are socially structured and how they might create possibilities for social interaction with target language speakers. Furthermore, it may help language teachers gain insight into the way their students' progress in language learning intersects with their investments in the target language.

I define classroom-based social research (CBSR) as collaborative research that is carried out by language learners in their local communities with the active guidance and support of the language teacher. In many ways, language learners become ethnographers in their local communities. Like the students in Heath's (1983) study, learners will develop their oral and literacy skills by collapsing the boundaries between their classrooms and their communities. Adult immigrants, however, differ from native-born students in that they do not have easy access to the linguistic codes or cultural practices of their local communities. The emphasis on CBSR, therefore, is to focus precisely on these aspects of social life, with a view to enhancing language learning and social interaction. As will be discussed below, a crucial component of CBSR is the use of the written word for reflection and analysis. As Ngo (1994) has convincingly argued from her personal experience of immigration, writing can build bridges not only across geographic space but across historical time:

> Through my writing I found myself again after a long time of being lost. I learned who I was in the past, who I was then, and who I wanted to be in the future. There I finally found freedom in writing. I flew in the sky with my pencil and notebook.

CBSR might include the following objectives and methodologies.

Objective 1: Investigative Opportunities to Interact with Target Language Speakers

Learners can be encouraged to investigate systematically what opportunities they have to interact with target language speakers, whether in the home, the workplace, or the community. To this end, they might make use of observation charts or logbooks.

Objective 2: Reflect Critically on Engagement with Target Language Speakers

Learners can be encouraged to reflect critically on their engagement with target language speakers. That is, learners might investigate the conditions under which they interact with target language speakers; how and why such interactions take place; and what results follow from such interaction. This might help learners develop insight into the way in which opportunities to speak are socially structured and how social relations of power are implicated in the process of social interaction. As a result, they may learn to transform social practices of marginalization.

Objective 3: Reflect on Observations in Diaries or Journals

Learners can be encouraged to reflect on their observations in diaries or journals. This will create opportunities for learners to write about issues in which they have a particular investment, and in so doing, develop their talents as writers. Specifically, learners could use their diaries to examine critically any communication breakdowns that may have occurred with target language speakers. These diaries could be written in the target language and collected regularly by the teacher. The diaries might give the language teacher access to information about the students' opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom, their investments in the target language, and their changing social identities. The teacher could help students critically reflect on findings from their research and make suggestions for further research, reflection, and action where necessary.

Objective 4: Pay Attention to and Record Unusual Events

Learners could be encouraged to pay particular attention to those moments when an occurrence, action, or event, surprises them or strikes them as unusual. By recording their surprises in the data collection process, the learners may become conscious of differences between social practices in their native countries and those in the target language community. Given the subject position student researcher rather than language learner or immigrant, learners may be able to critically engage their histories and their experiences from a position of strength rather than a position of weakness. With this enhanced awareness, learners may also be able to use the language teacher as an important resource for further learning.

Objective 5: Compare Data with Fellow Students and Researchers

Students could use the data they have collected as material for their language classrooms, to be compared with the findings of their fellow students and researchers. In comparing their data with other learners, the students will have an investment in the presentations that their fellow students make and a meaningful exchange of information may ensue. Students may begin to see one another as part of a social network in which their symbolic resources can be produced, validated, and exchanged. The teacher may also be able to use this information to structure classroom activities and develop classroom materials that will help learners claim the right to speak outside the classroom. Drawing on Heath (1993), the teacher could make use of drama to help students develop confidence in interacting with target language speakers. Furthermore, the teacher may be able to guide classroom discussion from a description of the findings of the research, to a consideration of what the research might indicate about broader social processes in the society. In this way, the teacher could help students interrogate their relationship to these larger social processes, understand how feelings of inadequacy are frequently socially constructed, and find spaces for the enhancement of human possibility.

In sum, second language theorists, teachers, and students cannot take for granted that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen, and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak.

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