

**EXPLORING CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP
IN A COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PROGRAM**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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Brian David Morgan, Ph.D., 2000
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ABSTRACT

This thesis reconceptualizes the problems and purposes of English as a Second Language by way of a case study and series of lessons on the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty. Central to this study is a dialogic engagement between various critical, postmodern, and applied linguistic theories for the purposes of enhancing participatory citizenship skills through ESL pedagogy. Throughout this thesis, the relative (in)compatibilities of these diverse conceptual models are evaluated through the specific classroom events, student experiences, and sociopolitical contexts of the local community centre where these lessons took place.

Chapter one outlines several key concepts for critical practice in community-based ESL programs. Chapter two takes up the issue of citizenship education and explores the complex ways in which the dominant discourses of ESL shape the democratic expectations of both teachers and students. In chapter three, the function of teacher research in the context of citizenship education is appraised. Data collection for the thesis is framed by alternative validity criteria sensitive to the ideological factors that are central to issues of politics and identity negotiation in public life. Chapter four describes the program and community setting where the case study takes place. Chapter five describes the actual lessons on the Quebec referendum,

interspersed with short theoretical discussions which provide a rationale for the teaching strategies chosen.

In chapter six and seven, the possibilities for theoretical hybridity or paradigmatic dialogue are explored in depth in the contexts of L2 pedagogical grammar and vocabulary teaching, respectively. Aspects of poststructural discourse and subjectivity are appraised alongside Hallidayan systemic-functionalism in a discussion of pedagogical grammar. In a discussion of vocabulary teaching, several poststructural semiotic concepts are evaluated in relation to applied linguistic research on morphology, word motivation and compositionality.

The final chapter of the thesis examines future trends in Canadian multicultural policy to anticipate their influence on community-based programs and to suggest directions for teaching in support of social justice in increasingly multicultural and multiracial contexts.

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CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PEDAGOGIES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The central event around which this thesis is organized is the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty. For most of the fall of that year, the referendum debate dominated the national media and the thoughts of most Canadians. At the Chinese Settlement Services Agency of Toronto (a pseudonym, henceforth CSSAT), concern for the future was also being appraised alongside the impending reunification (1997) of Hong Kong with the People's Republic of China. For my students at CSSAT, most of whom had recently emigrated from Hong Kong, the uncertainty that characterized unfolding developments in Canada and China was complicated further by the difficulties newcomers often encounter when trying to negotiate a new political identity: What "new" responsibilities and privileges did they acquire in the Canadian context? What could they say or not say in public?

This thesis describes how this process of identity negotiation took place in an ESL classroom and details the actual language lessons that were organized in response. These lessons, in turn, are examined in light of what they might contribute to traditional ESL expertise and, more specifically, the way we conceptualize citizenship in adult ESL programs. Beyond the convergence of personalities and histories involved, I also believe that the political events of 1995 and their classroom treatment at CSSAT have relevance to a much

broader set of concerns through which we might reinvestigate the basic aims and purposes of ESL pedagogy. Throughout this thesis, I will emphasize that language and language education are *social* practices, situated in the community and the broader society, and always implicated in the production of societal norms and aspirations. Active and critical citizenship, as I will argue in numerous places, is not simply an isolated curricular topic, but a complex form of understanding that is both consciously and unconsciously reproduced through all forms of daily interaction in ESL classrooms. A primary purpose of this thesis, then, is to articulate the types of practices and conceptual frames that might invigorate more traditional ESL domains (e.g. teacher research, pedagogical grammar, L2 vocabulary pedagogy) with a critical, social imagination.

This first chapter will outline a conceptual framework for community-based ESL pedagogies which, I believe, is more directly responsive to the sociocultural conditions that attract newcomers to community-based programs in the first place.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

The ESL instruction that takes place at CSSAT is indicative of a now established form of language programming in Toronto, Ontario. As recent as October, 1998, data collected for both the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), showed that the majority of ESL service providers in Ontario (56%) were community-based agencies (TESL Ontario, 1999).

Most of these programs (two-thirds, according to the same study) were located in and around the city of Toronto.

The current popularity in community-based ESL is the culmination of years of effort, beginning in the 1960s, directed towards providing accessible ESL programs for newcomers uninterested in or disadvantaged by "generic" ESL programs (Burnaby, 1988, p. 29) typically offered in formal educational settings such as schools, colleges and universities. In contrast to the standardized curricula, large class sizes, rigid scheduling, and limited learner support services of generic ESL programs, community-based ESL programs were introduced as a means of increasing access to language instruction by way of special provisions for childcare, flexible programming, outreach programs in areas with few newcomers, and lessons designed for those with low levels of formal education (Burnaby, 1998, p. 29; see also Cumming & Gill, 1992; Rockhill & Tomic, 1994).

For the past eleven years in Toronto, I have been working as a teacher, teacher-trainer, curriculum consultant, and materials writer for the types of community-based ESL programs described above. From the beginning, I found that the major preoccupations in ESL theory and the methodologies they supported were too general and overly focussed on the cognitive and descriptive aspects of language and language learning. Such approaches, in my opinion, did not adequately address the particular life conditions and experiences of students who were attracted to the community agencies I was familiar with. As a result, I started to think of "community" as not simply a description of my place of work but, instead, as a way of

conceptualizing my own practice. In what I call a "community-based ESL pedagogy," social needs are conceived of as equal to and often prior to linguistic concerns. Cultural, political, and linguistic practices that enrich community life or threaten its cohesion are key elements I look for when selecting complementary classroom strategies. To help me think about and organize my practice in such terms, I have explored a wide range of critical and postmodern theories concerned with notions of social identity, discourse, and power. In my teaching, research, and in my various publications, I have tried to identify the social possibilities these perspectives might generate within traditional ESL areas such as assessment, grammar, pronunciation, and L2 literacy (see Morgan, 1998, 1997b, 1995/1996). While applying critical theory to ESL teaching, I have also come to recognize that the knowledge base of ESL and the direct experiences of its practitioners have much to offer critical pedagogies (e.g. poststructuralism, cultural studies, feminist pedagogies) in ways that further the emancipatory goals to which they aspire.

Consequently, I believe that one of the most important contributions I can make in my profession, and to which this thesis is directed, could be described in terms of contributing to a constructive dialogue in which fundamentally different assumptions about the nature of language, the "reality" of the world around us (i.e. ontology), and the possibilities for knowledge (i.e. epistemology), are compared and evaluated with the hope of discovering "practical hybridities" that enrich ESL pedagogy. Chapters six and seven, in particular, examine the issues and possibilities for a constructive

dialogue relevant to the subfields of L2 pedagogical grammar and vocabulary pedagogy.

1.2.1 Precursors and "Fellow-Travelers"

Organizing ESL pedagogy in ways that are both responsive to local, community needs and respectful of "traditional" literacy and language practices is not an original idea for applied linguistics. Elsa Auerbach's work has been at the forefront in influencing teachers doing ESL community work (see Auerbach, 1996, 1995, 1989; Auerbach & McGrail, 1991). Many others, as well, have argued the point that in order to ensure full participation for immigrants, refugees and minorities in the broader society, the value systems and language practices of the home and local community need to be respected and incorporated to some extent within mainstream schooling as well as adult ESL and workplace programs (see Ashworth, 1985; Corson, in press, 1993; Cumming, 1991; Cumming & Gill, 1992; Cummins, 1996, 1994, 1989; Goldstein, 1997; May, 1994; New London Group, 1996; Smoke, 1998; Stern, 1997; Weinstein-Shr, 1993). Simply on the basis of promoting academic achievement and advancing equality of opportunity within modern liberal democracies, such claims are justified. Theorists such as Anthony Giddens (1994), Allan and Carmen Luke (in press), and the New London Group (1996), however, would go slightly further, viewing local diversity, sociocultural "hybridity" and "multiliteracies" in a more futuristic, and perhaps overly optimistic framework -- as crucial citizenship resources to negotiate and mediate the new

"realities" of global connectedness, rapid change, and increased economic insecurity.

While pedagogical support for minority languages and cultures would seem reasonable and just to most educators, it is important to remember that assimilationist policies, as reflected in the English-only movement in the USA, still prevail in many educational jurisdictions. Xenophobia, fears that multiculturalism and bilingualism undermine national identities, and deep-rooted ethnocentrism against aboriginal peoples, have all been influential at various times in the determination of language policy in both Canada and the USA (see Cummins, 1996; Ricento & Burnaby, 1998; Williams, 1998). Just the idea that different communities might need to be treated differently (in terms of social policy) or taught differently (in terms of language policy) in order to ensure their long-term "collective" survival would be resisted by both ideological conservatives and economic or "neo"-liberals (see Corson, in press; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1988; Taylor, 1994).

In the ESL literature, a number of important voices have been raised against ESL's progressivist and universalist leanings, the assumption that each new method or approach represented a "major" advance in our understanding and the necessary obsolescence of everything that came before. Pennycook's (1989) critique of the notion of "Method" was a major theoretical blow to universalism in ESL. Others such as Prabhu (1992), examined the complexities and folly of imposing any singular method or approach without recognition of the "dynamics" of each classroom situation. In the area of program design, the advantages of methodological flexibility and

adaptability to specific teaching contexts was formulated by Allen (1983) and supported by research conducted by Allen, Swain, Harley, and Cummins (1990). In *English in the Workplace Programs*, the need for program flexibility was also highlighted in Goldstein's (1997) case study which articulated the social dynamics (e.g. relations of gender, class and ethnicity) that both promoted and discouraged second language learning. In the area of language program evaluation, Lynch (1996) has produced "context-adaptive" assessment instruments that hold much promise for community-based ESL programs.

More recently, the ESL profession in general appears to have jumped on the bandwagon. Opposition to a "one size fits all" approach to language education is gaining many new followers. No surer sign of such a trend can be found than in the current development of a new case study series to be published by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the world's largest and perhaps most influential organization for ESL/EFL. The emphasis for series' contributors is on the "distinctiveness" of the program described and pedagogical suggestions that flow from it (TESOL, 1999, p. 2). Of note, one of the volumes is on "community partnerships," edited by Amy Schlessman. Methodological pluralism is equally celebrated in a forthcoming collection entitled *Particular Approaches: Specialists' Perspectives on English Language Instruction*, edited by John Murphy and Patricia Byrd. As Murphy (1998) states in the call for submissions, "none of the chapters will be devoted to any of the global (i.e., designer) methods already widely discussed in TESL/TEFL literatures. Rather, each chapter will

focus on a particular TESL/TEFL course." In the same "eclectic" vein, David Mendelsohn (1999) has recently edited a wonderfully innovative book called *Expanding Our Vision*, in which famous ESL contributors each select an influential thinker from outside of linguistics and language education and write about their possible contributions to ESL.

While these are promising trends, eclecticism and pluralism alone are not sufficient in terms of preventing a recurrence of the "inadvertent" problems which precipitated program innovation in first place. What is needed as well is a theory of critical practice and power relations directly applicable to the principles of diversity and pluralism which have recently gained prominence.

1.2.2 Defining Critical Practice for Community-Based ESL Pedagogies

In the following quote from Phillipson's (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism*, Henry Widdowson identifies a recurring problem in the implementation of language instruction in local ESL/EFL settings. His comments below provide a rationale and focal perspective with which I define the two key elements of "critical" teaching in community-based ESL pedagogies.

[W]e've tended always to make the same basic error, which is to assume that somehow it is the local conditions that have to be adjusted to the packaged set of concepts we bring with us rather than attempt to look into the real issues, practical as well as ideological, of implementation and innovation within these local contexts. ... I don't think we have brought into the operation an awareness of local conditions nor the effective

involvement of local people. (Henry Widdowson interviewed by Phillipson, 1992, p. 260)

From Widdowson's observation, community ESL work is conceptualized as "critical" by way of two interdependent dimensions of practice. The first is *transformative* and takes up the challenge of addressing "real issues," "local conditions," "the effective involvement of local people," and "implementation and innovation within these local contexts." To be a critical teacher, in this sense, involves helping the community I work with develop language skills that potentially challenge social power relations beyond the classroom. These relations might be intrinsic to the group itself and used normatively to regulate family and gender roles, for example (see Morgan, 1997b, 1998). Or, they may be part of broader relationships across various groups or boundaries of social identity (e.g. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ethnicity). One instance, would be CSSAT's participation in a broad coalition of groups that pressured the Ontario provincial government to keep a local women's hospital open.

In support of such initiatives, aspects of students' "linguistic" and "cultural capital" (Cf. Bourdieu, 1991; Corson, 1993; May, 1994), are seen as primary resources irrespective of the low status they may have measured against dominant social values or current TESOL orthodoxies.¹ Innovative pedagogies might include identifying or

¹ A good example would be in the area of explicit or direct grammar instruction. In my article, *Teaching the Gulf War in an ESL Classroom* (Morgan, 1992/1993), explicit reference to grammar instruction was deleted at the request of the editors because it was felt inappropriate for the journal's readers at a time when conventional theory (i.e. "strong" forms of the communicative approach) discouraged attention to form in language teaching. Much more will be said on this topic in chapter six.

modifying existing, traditional practices in ways that are *strategically* effective; for instance, the use of L1 and bilingual texts to clarify the issues involved. The key point here would be, once again, not to select a traditional practice simply out of respect for diversity or a fashionable interest in eclecticism, but rather on the basis of major points of articulation: the emergence of a controversial topic/event, its historical and temporal significance, and the particular intertextual meanings that this event may have for a specific community. Based on the alignment of these factors, a teacher would make a selective assessment of not only the available language resources of a minority community (e.g. specialized registers, decompositional strategies for L1 vocabulary learning, L1 critical language awareness skills) but also of the existing ESL corpus of materials, methods and theories.

The second "critical" dimension of community work is *reflexive*, and explores the persistent problem identified by Widdowson, the fact that applied linguists "always" make "the same basic error" and "assume that somehow it is the local conditions that have to be adjusted to the packaged set of concepts we bring with us." Critical reflexivity, in this case, means examining the following types of questions: In ESL and applied linguistics, how do the conventional rules followed in identifying, constructing and disseminating knowledge about language, inhibit community pedagogies in a systematic and perhaps unconscious way? What are the historical and discursive factors involved? Many writers have identified ESL's deep commitment to principles of objectivity, neutrality, and the generalisability of its findings through positivist research methods,

as major sources of its own "cultural politics" (see Benesch, 1993, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999; Cooke, 1987; Corson, 1997; Peirce, 1995; Pennycook, 1991; 1994b; Phillipson, 1992)? Such "reflexive" insights, however, are relevant insofar as they are formulated to address all aspects of daily practice in community-based ESL pedagogies: How does a particular method or theory deny as well as provide opportunities for students? What broader social values and power relations does a particular approach support? (see Anderson, 1989; Lynch, 1996; Simon & Dippo, 1986).

I can better elaborate on the transformative and reflexive strands of critical practice with reference to the classroom activities described in this thesis. The topic for classroom treatment, Quebec's 1995 referendum on sovereignty, required students to explore the notion of citizenship, not only in terms of familiarizing themselves with unfamiliar historical grievances but also in regards to defining new responsibilities within a new political culture. Critical reflection, on my part, focussed on research (see Bullard, 1989; Derwing, 1992) regarding the political passivity which seems to be a consequence of the methods and materials favoured in most Canadian ESL citizenship classes. Instruction in these programs has often been preoccupied with the rote learning of "facts" and the simulation of the question-and-answer format used at citizenship hearings. Without substance, or a sense of the histories and struggles which transform ideals into facts, such approaches reinforce an assumption that democratic rights are "just there" -- natural "things" -- rather than temporary compromises reflecting ongoing negotiation and struggle between competing social groups.

Such concerns were of particular relevance to the politics of the Quebec referendum: What did the term *sovereignty* actually mean? How did it compare to *independence*, for example? Did it refer to an incontrovertible "fact"? What were the implications for Quebec and for Canada's future? To take up these terms as facts, for which the teacher knew all and had all the correct answers, did not seem the best way to encourage active and critical citizenship. This required reflection on a theory of language and L2 vocabulary acquisition that might facilitate critical citizenship practices beyond the classroom.

A *correspondence* theory, in which language is conceived of as a neutral intermediary between concepts in our minds and "real" things and events in the world (see Bob Morgan, 1987), might direct students to take things as given, rendering democracy as simply a procedural choice between 'yes' or 'no' (see also *representational* and *externalist* theories of language; Chomsky, 1997, pp. 37-38). A *structural* theory, following the work of Saussure, had important advantages: Word meanings were no longer conceived of as reflections of innate and invariable properties of mind or nature. Rather, meanings were the *products* of a self-regulating language system -- prior to and independent of their use by individual speakers. A word or "sign" such as sovereignty operated by way of two elements: a signifier (a sound or graphic image) and a signified (the concept/meaning designated). According to Saussure, these two elements are bound to each other in an "arbitrary" way; in other languages, different signifiers would be used to signify the concept familiar to English speakers. Within the English language, the meaning or "value" attributed to the sign /sovereignty/ would be a

result of its relationship to and difference from other signs such as /independence/ or /autonomy/. In other languages, this same semantic field or linguistic chain might be divided up in different ways, using more or fewer signs, each one acquiring its specific usages and nuances in contradistinction to the others (see Barthes, 1967; Cherryhomes, 1988; Weedon, 1987).

For citizenship purposes, a structuralist approach suggested important social possibilities: If meanings are the products of language, then they can be changed by language. Yet by depicting signs as "arbitrary" and their meanings based solely on how they relate to other signs, Saussure's model tended to emphasize consensus and agreement amongst the "homogeneous" speakers of a language. What this theory specifically lacked in discussing the Quebec referendum was a sense that under certain political and historical conditions, words such as sovereignty might have many meanings or be intentionally ambiguous, reflecting social competition over the responsibilities and access to resources that a preferred meaning might suggest. To highlight such elements in the classroom, I was inspired by a *poststructural* understanding of language, in particular the concept of *différance* as formulated by French theorist Jacques Derrida (1982).

The relative strengths and weakness of such a poststructural approach are discussed at length in chapters six and seven. Interestingly, one of the resources that made this approach possible was my students' "traditional" literacy strategy of "bottom-up" or "lexis-centred" reading (see Parry, 1996; Bell, 1995) and their reliance on bilingual dictionaries in this process. Through close

analyses of key referendum vocabulary, many students realized that feelings of confusion and uncertainty are not necessarily the products of their L2 limitations. Rather, such ambiguities can reflect political strategies that, intentionally or not, position newcomers in ways that discourage them from participating in public life. When such critical language awareness encourages students to explore unfamiliar issues, speak and write about them, or guide their actions as citizens, the movement from reflective to transformative pedagogy is realized.

1.3 KEY CONCEPTS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PEDAGOGIES

The following section briefly outlines several key concepts for community-based ESL pedagogies. These concepts should be thought of as complementary rather than substitutive in regards to the existing knowledge base of applied linguistics and ESL. As I mentioned earlier, much could be gained through a constructive dialogue between critical, postmodern theorists and those who conceptualize language through more traditional disciplinary frames such as descriptive and cognitive linguistics. As well, such a dialogue would be greatly advanced by granting equal theoretical status to the experiences and intuitions of classroom teachers (see Clarke, 1994; Gore, 1993; Morgan, 1997b; van Lier, 1994).

1.3.1 Balancing Language Needs with Social Needs

The evolution of community programs has been inseparable from the social and political factors that necessitated their original inception. The key point here is that many students attend community-based ESL programs for social reasons. These reasons should be foregrounded for successful language instruction to occur. Some might feel that an enhanced focus on social needs somehow detracts from our responsibilities as language teachers. The perspective I offer here is that language is fundamentally a *social* practice to begin with, inseparable from every aspect of self and collective realization (see Fairclough, 1992; Janks, 1997a, 1997b, 1991). It is important, in terms of reflexive practice, to remember that the subordination of language teaching to invariant, universalized principles of cognition, acquisition and description was as much a product of historical and ideological factors as it was a result of linguistic "discovery" (see Benesch, 1993; Corson, 1997; Canagarajah, 1999; Cooke, 1987; Pennycook, 1994b; Phillipson, 1992). This does not invalidate the important insights that SLA research, descriptive and psycholinguists can offer. But it does require us, following Widdowson's critical assessment, to draw selectively from this body of knowledge based on local needs and issues.

I would also argue that the social or local contextualization of language teaching can generate unique strategies that otherwise would elude more systematic approaches derived from SLA research (see Morgan, 1997b, 1998). In our lessons on the Quebec referendum, for example, most of my students were evaluating

developments through their expectations and apprehensions of China's reacquisition of Hong Kong in 1997. Each controversial and unanticipated development in the one event seemed to influence perceptions and precautions regarding the other. The fact that my students had troubles using their L2 to clearly express their evolving feelings led me to organize an explicit grammar lesson on modality forms. The resulting classroom activity was important not just in terms of acquiring new vocabulary and structure but in the ideas that were exchanged, evaluated, and even experimented with. In this way, the "grammar" sentences produced in class were fundamentally about "identity negotiation" (see Cummins, 1996; Peirce, 1995) indicating students' evolving perceptions of the new political culture they were becoming part of and its relationship to their collective past:

1.3.2 Language and Identity

Language does not simply report reality, nor is it merely a transparent code conveying the essential elements of thoughts in our minds or objects in the phenomenal world (Cf. *correspondence* or *representational* theories of language; Bob Morgan, 1987; Chomsky, 1997; Pennycook, 1994b). Language has a central role in shaping our perceptions, expectations, and our sense of who we are and who might be, both individually and collectively. This does not mean that the sum of our thoughts and expressions represent a "false" or "distorted consciousness" reflecting unalterable forces of structuration and dominant class interests (Cf. "theories of social reproduction,"

Canagarajah, 1999; May, 1994, McLaren, 1989). But neither are we "autonomous" in the sense that all our thoughts come from within, the products of individual self-expression and self-understanding. We are instead subjects *of* and *through* discourses (see Belsey, 1980; Cherryholmes, 1988; Corson, in press, 1995; Cummins, 1996; Harré & Gillet, 1994; Peirce [Norton], 1995; Simon, 1992; Weedon, 1987).

Along with simple speech acts, language has a central role in defining our perceptions and experiences of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, or spirituality. But these definitions are never final. In addition to conveying the norms, responsibilities and privileges of affiliation, language also provides the means through which the "rules" of identity can be mediated, resisted or transformed. In the daily process of communicating -- especially with people from different social backgrounds -- we sometimes become "conscious" of who we are and the particular set of symbols, meanings, rules, and values through which we identify ourselves in relation to others. As a result of such interactions, the traditional "rules" of identity can become even stronger than before, especially as a way of resisting those who would try to devalue or trivialize the beliefs that define us. Or, alternatively, some of us may begin to act and express ourselves in ways that potentially transform the prior rules with which our self and collective understanding are formulated. What often takes place, especially in multicultural, multiracial cities like Toronto, is a dynamic fusion of old and new -- of syncretic practices, "hybrid" ethnicities (New London Group, 1986), and the formation of "new" solidarities which improve the life chances of minority communities.

For community ESL purposes, the conjunction of language and identity theorized above foregrounds a number of important pedagogical considerations: Teachers and students are active participants, rather than passive recipients, in the production of community and social values. Through classroom relationships and interactions, teachers consciously and unconsciously define what is desirable and possible for newcomers (see Benesch, 1993, 1998; Cummins, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Norton [Peirce], 1997; Vandrick, 1997). In Simon's (1992) words, "When we teach, we are always implicated in the construction of a horizon of possibility for ourselves, our students and our communities" (Simon 1992, p. 56). This "horizon" is imagined through not only the advice and values we verbalize but also the materials and methods we bring to the class.

Not every ESL lesson needs to be or should be explicitly directed towards challenging power relations or negotiating identities. But to presume the inherent neutrality or simple functionalism of a method or language activity is equally misguided. As I have demonstrated before (Morgan 1997b, 1998), "common" ESL subject areas such as pronunciation (i.e. sentence-level intonation) can be contextualized in ways that make identity and power relations central to their development and L2 acquisition. The lessons and discussions pertaining to pedagogical grammar and L2 vocabulary pedagogy, in this thesis, offer a similar perspective.

1.3.3 Discourses, Power/Knowledge, and Community-Based ESL

One of the most challenging parts of doing critical ESL work is identifying and framing transformative practices in ways that conform to, or *appear* to conform to, the institutional and curricular parameters that are prevalent at a particular moment in time. In order to ensure the favourable reception of my work by colleagues and supervisors, I am required to follow many written and unwritten "rules" -- a *discourse* -- about what counts as knowledge and how it is to be discovered and represented in my profession (see Cherryholmes, 1988; Cummins, 1996; Corson, in press, 1995; Harré & Gillet, 1994; Pennycook, 1994a; Simon, 1992). These days in Canada, for example, it is almost inconceivable to propose an innovation for ESL that is not defined in terms of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs) (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 1996) nor uses its proficiency descriptors and task-based criteria to explain it. For many, the CLBs have become so ingrained that they constitute the only framework through which change and innovation is imaginable.

In community-based ESL programs, much of what takes place and does *not* take place can be said to be a result of the operation of *discourses*, a concept I associate closely with the work of Michel Foucault (1999, 1982, 1977). Discourses regulate and ascribe social value to all forms of communicative interaction -- oral and written texts, gestures and images -- of which language is one important modality. Discourses "govern what can be said and what must remain

unsaid, who can speak and who must listen" (McLaren, 1989, p. 180). "Discourses are about the creation and limitations of possibilities, they are systems of power/knowledge (*pouvoir/savoir*) within which we take up subject positions" (Pennycook, 1994a, p. 128).

Based on these descriptions, it might seem possible to conceptualize the notion of discourse as interchangeable or synonymous with *ideology*. However, as Pennycook (1994a) suggests, such an assumption would reduce important ontological and teleological distinctions underlying each (see also Rouse, 1994). "Ideology" suggests the distortion or manipulation of "truths" as well as the co-existence of social domains free of power and ideology, and to which humanity's natural and progressive inclinations are directed. But for Foucault, as with most postmodern thinkers, there are no "spaces" free of "distortion" or "coercion", only other discourses, each with their own systems that create and limit the possibilities for "truth" and "knowledge" in the institutional and disciplinary fields to which they pertain.

A similar distinction can be made in regards to notions of power. Liberal, progressivist discourses of education often depict knowledge and power as independent of each other and sometimes even opposed to each other in zero-sum terms: Poverty and oppression, in this perspective, can be eradicated in a society through the provision of more education. Foucault's perspective of power/knowledge is radically different from both liberal and neo-Marxist perspectives. Advances in knowledge create the conditions for new forms of power. The more that is learned within a field of knowledge the greater the potential for new forms of surveillance

and domination acting to "normalize" our desires, thoughts, and actions (see Foucault, 1997; 1982, 1980, 1977). In Foucault's perspective, power/knowledge is dynamic and always present in our work as ESL teachers. It can never be completely understood nor finally "overcome" in the sense we often associate with adversarial struggles for freedom or emancipation. The "'agonism' between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence" (Foucault, 1982, p. 223). Reflexive practice, in this perspective, is never over. Each new method and theory in ESL requires us to examine not only the potential benefits it brings to a particular class but also the new forms of domination it makes possible. Indeed, for Foucault, the manner in which we define our responsibilities and conduct ourselves within such pedagogical encounters would be of primary relevance to our development as ethical subjects (see Bernauer & Mahon, 1994; Foucault, 1997).

It would be unfair to suggest that Foucault subscribed to an extreme relativism or anti-rationalism in which anything at anytime counts equally as "knowledge". What Foucault did emphasize is that specialized objects of knowledge (such as the dominant constructs in ESL) come into being as worthy topics of study only by way of the discursive formations which make it possible to talk about them. In his genealogical work, Foucault attempted to specify the historical contingencies which permitted shifts and new alignments in discursive formations to occur, which, in turn, made new forms of power/knowledge available (see Bernauer & Mahon, 1994; Rouse, 1994). In chapter two, these ideas of power/knowledge and shifts in

discursive formations are explored in greater detail in the context of ESL citizenship practices.

1.3.4 Community-Based ESL Pedagogies as "Situated Practice"

Community-Based ESL pedagogies are "situated" in the local identity experiences, meaning-making capacities, and power relations that effect those who participate in community programs (see Lather, 1996; Miller, 1996; New London Group, 1996; Simon, 1992). The plurality of "pedagogies" reflects the fact that there is no singular method or curricular model that warrants universal application for such forms of teaching.

In support and underlying the recent interest in "situated" approaches to teaching are the epistemological and ontological assumptions that define the postmodernist critique of modernity and its systems of universality, objectivity, and rationality (see Haraway, 1991; Yeatman, 1994). Belief in pluralism, incommensurabilities, or irreducible differences, however, does not license an "anything goes" relativism in the classroom. As I stated earlier, the selection and/or modification of local or traditional language practices should always be based on "points of articulation." Drawing on Foucault's notion of power/knowledge, I would reiterate an earlier point that neither power nor emancipation inhere exclusively within a particular method. Rather, it is often the contextualization of a method which determines whether it articulates with "collaborative" or "coercive" forms of power in the broader society (Cummins, 1996, 1994).

In terms of situated pedagogies, the New London Group (NLG) (1996, pp. 84-85) identifies a number of weaknesses requiring the specific attention and intervention of teachers. Of particular relevance for ESL, the NLG points out that for adults, learning is much less of an instinctual or "unconscious" activity as it is for children. As well, NLG points out that even within a relatively homogeneous, local context, learners abilities and achievements can vary significantly from each other and in relation to curricular objectives. Another key point to consider relates to implementation of traditional knowledge forms in class. The habituation or internalization of skills from an early age does not guarantee conscious awareness of the elements involved. Similarly, immersion within a specific social context does not lend itself to a critical awareness of historical, political, or cultural articulations that shape the local environment. All of the NLG's points emphasize that in situated pedagogies, teachers still have important directive and expert roles to play in the production of "local" knowledge.

In this thesis, situated practice is a key feature of what takes place in the classroom. Traditional textual practices are used to critically engage with political and historical developments in the broader society. In keeping with the advice offered by the NLG, I also detail specific instances in the classroom where I focus on critical language awareness as it pertains to my students' L1 literacy skills and L2 learning strategies.

1.3.5 Conceptualizing a Classroom in Terms of "Community"

A community can be simply described as a group of people living together in the same neighbourhood, which might coincide with some form of political boundary such as an electoral riding or ward (Cf. "geopolitical" communities, Ashworth, 1985). A community can also describe people who share a similar background based on identity criteria such as ethnicity, common language, or race, for example. Another type of community involves people who share similar goals and interests (Burney, p. 21, 1995; Ashworth, 1985).

As a sociopolitical concept, however, community is far more difficult to pin down in definitional terms, probably because it is often defined more by what it is *not* rather than what it is within a given historical juncture (see Nisbet, 1966). Politicians of all stripes wax poetic on the need to "build communities" -- usually upon the foundation of principles they cherish most and find wanting in the greater society. Ideological conservatives trumpet the community values of respect for authority, property, and local neighbourhoods. Social liberals and radicals might speak nostalgically of the community support systems which alleviate the cold, alienating realities of big city life and commerce. As Nisbet (1966) explains, "The ties of community can be real or imagined, traditional or contrived.... Fundamental to the strength of the bond of community is the real or imagined antithesis formed in the same social setting by the non-communal relations of competition or conflict" (pp. 47-48).

In the case of community-based ESL programs, it has been the "antithesis" provided by "generic" ESL programs which have actually

precipitated their inception and growth (Burnaby, 1988). Many students come to community-based programs because of the wide range of settlement services they provide. Many come because of feelings of affinity for agency staff and other students based on shared identity. And others attend simply because the program is conveniently close. Those who choose to stay, often stay on for years, sometimes outlasting several classroom teachers in a particular class, as has happened in many classes at CSSAT. The group bonds that are developed, negotiated, and often contested over time characterize what many of us imagine community to be -- a commitment to collective goals and often familial-like responsibilities (Nisbet, 1966, p. 48). In a class, some students will always find these bonds, and their sense of affiliation with the agency, more imagined than real, more contrived than traditional.

Conceptualizing a class as a form of community draws on the familiar notions of commonality (location and/or interest) expressed at the top of this section, but also on the "key concepts" outlined above. Drawing on the discussion of language and identity, I would restate the point that community meanings and cohesiveness are negotiated through the meaning-making activities that take place in the classroom. "From the community; to the community" (Auerbach, 1996), aptly describes this process, which goes on (most often in L1) in the restaurants, local businesses, and other places of meeting long after the class is over. The classroom as a place where collective identities are negotiated is a central aspect of the lessons described in chapters four, five, six, and seven: What does it mean to be a new citizen in a country facing potential dissolution? What does the

referendum mean for recent immigrants from Hong Kong, also facing major transformation in the political and economic status of their birthplace? How does an ESL teacher organize a "situated" language syllabus responsive to emerging events and meanings in the class?

Drawing from Foucault, it is also important to explore the duality, complexities and paradoxes of community relations through the notions of discourse and power/knowledge: What potential forms of domination and normalization are made possible by the assertion of communal responsibilities? What are the discursive formations that support "private" agendas and competitive interests advanced through the promotion of community values in the class, the agency, the community, and broader society? How are ESL theories and methods implicated? How might we explore "Foucault's assertion that 'nothing is innocent'" (Lather, 1996, p. 71) in the situated contexts of a community-based ESL classroom?

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

In chapter two, a survey of national and international perspectives on citizenship is followed by a discussion specific to Canada and ESL. The conceptual framework for this discussion comes from Foucault and explores the discursive formations that have shaped ESL's approach to citizenship training in Canada. Taking up the notion of power/knowledge, I explore the following "reflexive" question: In which ways does our training as ESL professionals potentially define and limit our students expectations and participation as citizens in their new country?

In chapter three, the issue of power/knowledge is also explored in the context of teacher research. I begin the chapter by examining a key question related to the notion of community-based ESL pedagogies: What forms of teacher research support a focus on social needs, identity issues, and power relations as defined in chapter one? I begin with a discussion of the challenges of doing postmodern-inspired teacher research and the issues involved in doing research that is both action-oriented and situated, yet sensitive to the larger discursive factors and power relations that may be less apparent in the immediate research context of the classroom. Following this discussion, I outline the various techniques I used to collect data for this thesis as they relate to "naturalistic" validity criteria developed by Lynch (1996) and Lather (1986).

Chapter four looks at the background and setting of the community agency, CSSAT, in which the lessons on the Quebec referendum took place. The chapter begins with a brief history of community-based ESL programming in Ontario and a description of several exemplary programs in the Toronto area. Next, the specific program features and community setting of CSSAT are detailed along with a discussion of recent political developments in the local Chinese-Canadian community and their discursive or intertextual influences on policy and pedagogy at CSSAT.

Chapter five is focussed on the following questions: What does it mean to conceptualize an ESL classroom as a community? What types of "situated" practices and theories of language learning support this approach? I take up these questions by way of a detailed account of the actual lessons that took place around the 1995 Quebec

referendum. Interspersed with classroom accounts are small theoretical sections that substantiate the conceptual model outlined in chapter one. In these sections, I also describe the application and critical assessment of L1 learning strategies and literacy practices (especially vocabulary learning) for the purposes of increasing L2 critical language awareness on the referendum.

Chapters six and seven take up the notion of a "paradigm dialogue" as it relates to pedagogical grammar and L2 vocabulary teaching in the field of ESL. The key questions involved are: What can "traditional" applied linguists and ESL professionals gain from a constructive engagement with postmodern and poststructural notions of language? Conversely, what might postmodern-inspired educators learn from the expertise developed by pedagogical grammarians (especially systemic-functionalists) and psycholinguists and L2 vocabulary specialists. As I argue in these chapters, central to any "legitimate" theoretical dialogue must be the inclusion of teachers' experiences and perspectives. To this end, both chapters describe actual classroom activities in which areas of discursive or paradigmatic accommodation are explored. Chapter six features the last lesson that took place on the Quebec referendum, a grammar lesson on modality forms. Chapter seven takes up a L2 vocabulary lesson related to the recent bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. In both case, the overarching theme is enhancing critical citizenship through L1 and L2 language awareness.

In chapter eight, I elaborate on one of the themes introduced in chapters one and four: the political conditions which precipitated the original development of community-based ESL programs and will

continue to shape their future course in Ontario. This time the perspective shifts towards the discourses of "official" multiculturalism and bilingualism, and the types of cultural politics that may emerge in the future. Central to this discussion is a critical assessment of Charles Taylor's (1994) influential text on the "politics of recognition" in multicultural, liberal democratic societies. Based on my reading of this text, and my experiences in community-based ESL, I conclude the thesis by suggesting several ways in which ESL teachers in community programs might contribute actively and critically towards the ideals of social justice in a diverse and diversifying society.

CHAPTER 2
EDUCATING FOR CITIZENSHIP:
CONCEPTUAL AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as an introduction and literature review of the notion of active and critical citizenship education, a theme that will be explored and developed through a community-based pedagogy in subsequent chapters. I will begin by outlining several conceptual and ideological difficulties inherent in the topic followed by a review of recent international research and Canadian ESL perspectives in this area.

In Canada, some suggest (Bullard, 1989; Derwing, 1992; Derwing & Munro, 1989) that thoughtful, political awareness is often ignored in the rush to prepare ESL students for the citizenship exams. Who is to blame? Some ESL researchers suggest ulterior motives on the part of government. Others claim that the relative powerlessness of ESL teachers restrains them from promoting active and critical democratic practices in their classrooms. I will argue that these may be partial truths. Drawing on Foucault's notions of discourse and power/knowledge, I will construct several analogies that provocatively link foundational ESL principles and constructs (e.g. structural description, the atomized subject of SLA, language as input) to social practices that shape passive political subjectivities.

2.2 CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE, SLOGANS, OR NORMATIVE VALUES?

One of the more characteristic aspects of citizenship is that it is a highly ambiguous and contested notion in spite of the prominence placed upon it in many formal educational documents. Sears and Hughes (1996, p. 126) note that misunderstandings about the meanings of citizenship education frequently occur because "the same language means different things to different people." Fashionable concepts and desired outcomes such as "the educated citizen", "active" or "responsible" citizenship often operate in the public sphere as educational slogans, whose consensual appearance can serve to disguise particular social and political interests (Sears and Hughes, 1996, p. 126). In the words of Popkewitz (1980) such slogans are "systematically ambiguous" in that they "tell us nothing about the course of action that is being called for" (p. 304). In this way, they "create the illusion that an institution is responding to its constituency, whereas the needs and interests actually served are other than those publicly expressed" (Popkewitz, 1980, p. 304).

Sloganeering, and the ulterior motives and functions behind the rhetoric of official policy, have been duly noted in the Canadian context. For example, Cummins and Danesi (1990) indicate that while altruistic values such as tolerance, open-mindedness and respect for diversity are recurrent themes in contemporary citizenship documents, government programs in Canada actually lack commitment in this regard, tending to promote the superficial expressions of minority cultures, a type of "celebratory

multiculturalism" of food, clothing, crafts and music, over substantive programs that would help minorities redress structural inequalities in their relationships with dominant groups (see also "benevolent multiculturalism" in May, 1994; Williams, 1998).

Textual ambiguities and obfuscation are not the only concerns pertaining to citizenship education from a critical and community perspective. Sears and Hughes (1996) point out that disputes over the meanings and functions of citizenship "arise not only because it is an internally complex concept, but also because it is a *normative* one" (p. 126, emphasis added). Expanding on this word/concept, we might say that dominant notions of citizenship depict existing social relations as *normal* -- just there, the inevitable and only possibility - - rather than having been *normalized* through discourses. What do we mean by this? Homi Bhabha has an alliterative term, "narratives of the nation", that brings to mind anthemic phrases such as "We the people," "The true north, strong and free," "The middle kingdom". These reverential phrases have a potent, psychic effect on many of us. They evoke strong feelings of shared values and belonging to something monumental, warranting devotion and potential sacrifice. In the modern nation-state, however, the desire for collective identification and belonging has its inherent underside, which has often been intolerance. As Bhabha (1990) cautions, "national narratives ... rationalize the authoritarian, 'normalizing' tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative" (p. 4).

Normative citizenship practices, as Bhabha indicates, have strong moralistic tones and universalizing tendencies. Their

persuasive force is generated by neatly disguising the privileges of the present within fictive and selective retellings of the nation's past, a practice that Raymond Williams (1989, p. 58) aptly calls "predisposed continuity". Such belief systems are rarely, if ever, depicted as the outcome of historical struggle and the entrenchment of the victor's value system over that of the vanquished. And by this means the consent of the dispossessed (aboriginal nations in Canada, the USA, and Australia, for example) and the less powerful in society is furthered. Thus through schooling, those on the margins of power are directed, implicitly and explicitly, to accept certain rules of social mobility for which they have little possibility of benefiting. Indeed, as Bruce Curtis suggests (1988), citizenship education in the early years of public schooling in Ontario was centrally concerned with reproducing obedient and passive political subjects willing to work hard and unlikely to challenge the status quo.

For some, the preferred direction in citizenship education, in practice, would not stray too far from its pacifying and assimilating function in state formation. Woyach (cited in Sears & Hughes 1996, p. 125) claims that different contemporary conceptions of democratic citizenship can be arranged along "a complex continuum of opinion" ranging from "elitist" to "populist" perspectives. Not unlike early beliefs in Ontario, an elitist orientation is one in which ordinary citizens are viewed as incapable of competently making public decisions. From an elitist perspective, democratic participation would necessarily be restricted to voting in elections, in which citizens would select from well-educated representatives, or "elites", who would formulate policy and enact laws. At the other hypothesized

extreme, populist accounts encourage radical activism in all aspects of public decision-making, seeing this process as key to developing awareness of the common good and as the best means to promote and protect the interests of individual citizens and communities. In the ESL classroom, one could imagine a number of useful pedagogical activities that analyzed official policies (e.g. the imposed megacity for the Greater Toronto Area) to see where they might be positioned on such a democratic continuum.

On a more global scale, the International Bureau of Education recently published a preliminary report on a 1993 study entitled *What education for what citizenship?* While the report acknowledges the valuable approaches to democracy as practiced in Western countries, it also qualified the applicability and generalisability of Western norms for other societies and cultures. Of significance, in terms of the principles outlined in a community-based ESL pedagogy, the IBE document eschews a transmission approach to citizenship education in favour of one that necessarily involves a process of critical reflexivity and contextual mediation based on localized needs and histories:

[D]emocratic evolution worldwide is a much more complex problem than just transferring Western meanings everywhere. It implies that the building of democratic regimes does not result from the transplanting of immutable sets of values or of institutions from one society to another, but rather from a process of creation -- or, in some cases, of institutional re-appropriation -- founded on the social practices and cultural features of each society. (Albala-Bertrand, 1997, p. 2)

The IBE substantiates its findings by indicating particular value orientations that mediate democratic citizenship development. For example, their data suggest that students who have recently lived under dictatorial or authoritarian regimes are less likely to "recognize the State's right to enforce law by resorting to force, which may be required legitimately to preserve the regime" (Albala-Bertrand, 1997, p. 4). Also, the study notes that students from wealthy social sectors place less importance on the notion of economic rights (i.e. the right to a job). And the rights of women (in terms of employment and political participation) were perceived as of secondary importance by most respondents (Albala-Bertrand, 1997, p. 4). Other value orientations cited included the relationship between *cosmopolitanism* (i.e. the degree to which students perceive their civic and political space extending beyond the boundary of their own society) and openness to sociocultural differences. As well, the IBE study indicated a high correlation between *social solidarity* (i.e. the acceptance of potential self-sacrifice for the well being of others) and heightened awareness of democratic practices, economic justice, and the conservation of human and natural resources (Albala-Bertrand, 1997, p.5).

To reiterate the main points outlined in the IBE study, teaching for an active and critical democracy does not simply mean the inculcation of Western-defined values through universal methods. Citizenship education must not only take into account important ideals and objectives but also critically engage with particular value orientations and initial perceptions of students and teachers alike. In the ESL classroom, following the study's suggestions, this would

include developing awareness through specific and relevant subject-matter as well as implementing methods that encourage "learning through concrete action on reality" (Albala-Bertrand, 1997, p. 6).

In reference to insights raised by researchers such as Popkewitz, "concrete action" might include an expanded functional-notional syllabus that could be termed English for Self-Defence (see Morgan, 1995/1996). In the classroom, traditional competency-based instruction would be integrated with critical language skills that identify and challenge ambiguity, dismissiveness, or the displacement of civic responsibilities through institutional language practices. Lessons designed to increase L2 vocabulary acquisition, for example, might also examine the intrinsic polyvalency of signs/slogans, which supports their contingent and often surreptitious distribution in the public sphere. These would be important prerequisites to enable civic participation for anyone, not just newcomers to Canada. While some might assume that a new language poses insurmountable obstacles in this endeavor, newcomers have an "advantage" in unfamiliarity; that is, as outsiders they have not internalized the normative discourses that shape our political subjectivity to the degree of more longstanding citizens.

A key point is that ESL students offer resources for citizenship development that are not always recognized or appreciated. Not surprisingly, ESL students' collaborative contributions are most welcome when they remain uncritical of our preferred teaching strategies and cherished social values. But in some regards, the vantage point of newcomers can be informative and scrutinizing in ways that elude the common-sense beliefs of more established

citizens. Paulo Freire's notions of problem-posing, dialogism and critical co-investigation have been inspirational in this regard (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Freire, 1997; McLaren & Leonard, 1993). It is precisely through our engagement with other ways of knowing and signifying the world that we become aware of the partiality of our own knowledge and the obstacles that dominant language practices impose on developing an active and critical citizenry.

2.2.1 Citizenship Education in Canadian ESL Classrooms

In the context of Canadian ESL programming, the kinds of language priorities necessary for active participation in political life have yet to be seriously explored. ESL citizenship education has tended to treat the idea of citizenship as synonymous with *naturalization*, the acquisition of official Canadian status (Bullard, 1989, p. 21). In this regard, classes and materials have focussed primarily on the types of questions and procedures required to successfully complete the citizen registration process (see Bell, 1983). As noted by several authors (Bullard, 1989; Derwing, 1992; Derwing & Munro, 1989; Sauvé, 1989), the content covered has been generally the same across both specific ESL citizenship classes and regular ESL courses that integrate a citizenship component within. Usual topics such as geography, key historical dates, levels of government, and names of political leaders are core curricula.

A reduced conceptualization of citizenship education in ESL is substantiated through data collected during Derwing and Munro's

1987 examination of Canadian citizenship preparation. Commenting on their study, Derwing (1992, p. 197) notes, for example, that 86 percent of the program co-ordinators who responded stated that preparing students for the court hearing was their primary objective. In contrast, 26 percent believed their role was to help students participate in Canadian society, while 6 percent identified English language development as a main objective. Surprisingly, "only 20 percent of the respondents identified the development of participatory skills as even a secondary objective" (Derwing, 1992, p. 197). In fact, the authors of the study note that "many co-ordinators were unaware that there could be any reason other than the court hearing for offering citizenship instruction" (Derwing, 1992, p. 197).

Given the priorities as perceived at the level of program delivery, the methodology employed has tended towards rote memorization of Canadian "facts" and simulation of the question-and-answer format used at citizenship hearings (Bell, 1983; Bullard, 1989; Derwing, 1992; Derwing & Munro, 1989). The issues here are complex. The memorization of facts, on its own, should not predetermine all future possibilities for citizenship. Indeed, an argument might be made that some astute students would prefer this "uncontroversial" learning style because it allows them to gain citizenship safely without revealing their "true" political colours. But this argument would only pertain to those students whose prior political experiences and critical consciousness had already been substantially developed (and possibly repressed) in their former countries. As the IBE study identifies, methodological approaches which emphasize factual memorization are potentially

counterproductive in terms of developing the skills necessary for long-term and informed democratic life.² Bullard (1989) concurs pointing out that current classroom methods reinforce a view of citizenship as a "static object" to be acquired. Similarly, in what might be seen as a particularly disturbing example of the *washback* effect through testing (see Cumming, 1996; Lynch, 1996; Wall & Alderson, 1996), Derwing notes that "The Citizenship Act serves to encourage a minimal approach to citizenship instruction in that citizenship and ESL programs generally react to the limited knowledge and language criteria stated therein; the whole application procedure establishes a test mentality in newcomers and their instructors alike" (1992, p. 193).

Avvy Go (1998), a Toronto Lawyer and director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, experienced the citizenship testing process first-hand, as a new immigrant to Canada, and gives a damning account of its numbing effects upon democratic life:

Looking back, I search for an answer to the question as to when I first felt like a true Canadian. Definitely it was not the day when I had a brief encounter with the citizenship judge, as I mechanically recited the answers that were spoon-fed to me

² The IBE is somewhat cautious -- and reasonably so given their concern with local knowledge mediation -- in endorsing a single methodology in terms of facilitating democratic participation. Nonetheless, the authors state that transmission methods, which offer ready-made problems and solutions, are unlikely to encourage active civic participation. In contrast, participation is enhanced when teachers assume a mediator role by encouraging debate without drawing conclusions (Albala-Bertrand 1997, p.6). The IBE qualifies this observation, however, by indicating that while student-centred pedagogies encourage participation, they do not necessarily correlate with "the acquisition of an *awareness* about the political norms of the regime and its legal and ethical dimensions (human rights)" (emphasis in original; Albala-Bertrand 1997, p. 6).

by my friend. Nor was it the time I took the citizenship oath and swore allegiance to a foreign monarch who had colonized my people for more than a century. I realize that, ironically, the moment I became a true Canadian was the very moment when I began to challenge the Canadian system as it impacts on immigrants like myself. It was then that I began to live and breathe the democratic principles and the principles of equality as found in our Constitution. (Go, 1998, P. A20)

In her article, Go recalls her subsequent discovery of the historical dimensions of Canadian history and politics not included in the citizenship test: examples of discrimination against Chinese immigrants and immigrants of colour, the expropriation of aboriginal land to satisfy the needs of British and French colonizers. Connecting this past with the present, Go identifies the continued imposition of misguided citizenship criteria -- most notably a proposal that the citizenship test be taken in French or English without the help of an interpreter -- that penalize those members of the immigrant community whose familial responsibilities and financial needs preclude attending ESL classes. Regarding both the source and remedy of "second-class" citizenship, Go's critique is unambiguous: "Citizenship classes are needed, not to help new immigrants pass the test, but to truly educate them about their rights and responsibilities in their new home.... Once and for all, let's rid ourselves of this hollow screening machine called the citizenship test" (Go, 1998, p. A20).

Reflecting on the personal experiences of Go and the observations made by the various ESL researchers above, a relevant question might be posed here: Are we witnessing a particular hidden government agenda in Canada regarding the Citizenship Act and the "test mentality" it encourages? Or, can the implicit pacifying effects

critiqued above represent the types of anonymous and productive power/knowledge relations identified by Foucault (1982) through his conceptualization of discourse? Certainly, these would not be mutually exclusive or delimiting assumptions. That is, the defining point at which institutions and their representatives act either with conscious intent or as unconscious subjects in conformity to larger discursive practices would be unstable and open to the types of strategic challenges or provocative semiotic practices identified by Simon (1992, pp. 57-59). So for example, when educational consultants such as Derwing and Munroe deconstruct citizenship education policies -- especially those they were hired by the Canadian government to examine -- they set into motion a process by which "common-sense" assumptions regarding the presumed neutrality of citizenship curricula and methods are (re)configured. This act of "provocative semiosis" (Simon, 1992, pp. 57-59), of course, is potentially a double-edged sword. If this new awareness helps educators, students, and policy makers to promote active citizenship through more appropriate methodologies, then it could be seen in terms of building "collaborative relations of power" (Cummins, 1996, 1994). On the other hand, this heightened awareness can assist some policy makers in (re)defining citizenship criteria in ways that discourage critical participation in public life, thus contributing to what Cummins calls "coercive relations of power" (Cummins, 1996, 1994). What might appear paradoxical here actually serves as a reminder to critical educators that empowering practices do not necessarily inhere within a particular method but are also contingent

upon dynamic power relations in the community and the greater society.

For ESL teachers, then, effective citizenship education requires critical scrutiny of methods and student value orientations as indicated in the IBE study. But in and of itself this approach may lack rigor unless teachers also examine how particular educational practices and values articulate with social power relations beyond the classroom in a specific time and place. The first priority or articulation, in this regard, might be greater self-awareness of the injustices experienced by teachers in their working lives. Sauvé (1989) notes that most citizenship teachers are underpaid, part-time employees compelled to seek other means of support, thereby leaving little time to explore relevant, participatory curricula. She paints a depressing yet accurate picture of the contradictions in the profession:

For years, ESL teachers have felt like second-class citizens, especially those teachers in the adult area. We have often not been regarded as full employees although we teach as many hours as others who are. In some cases, the employer has carefully seen that we teach fifteen minutes a day less than do the full employees. We have not had benefits or job security. (Sauvé, 1989, p. 121)

Sauvé (1989) goes on to make the connection that I feel is crucial for active and critical citizenship education. In her words, "To empower our students is first of all to look at our own relationship to power. If we are to be educators, rather than servile trainers, we cannot behave like pawns in somebody else's chess game" (p. 121). Elsewhere (see Morgan 1997a, 1998) I have argued that such

inequitable working conditions are systematically compounded by both publishing practices in ESL as well as the disproportionate influence of academic values and conventions in shaping policy for organizations that purport to represent ESL teachers (see also Canagarajah, 1996; Clarke, 1994; Johnson, 1997; van Lier, 1994).

For ESL teachers, critical awareness and increased activism might help redress some of the power imbalances Sauv e has identified. In a similar perspective, Ashworth (1985), Cooke (1993), and Elson (1989), all writing within a Canadian context, would include greater public participation and advocacy on the part of ESL instructors as a necessary component towards an expanded scope of citizenship inquiry. Such responsibilities reflect the fact that ESL teachers are uniquely positioned to evaluate the political and community contexts that have direct bearing on their students' lives and the continued operation of their programs. To this end, Ashworth (1985, p. 103) provides what I believe to be an indispensable set of concerns that ESL teachers need to be aware of for their own advocacy purposes as well as the needs of their students. These would include an awareness of:

- * the philosophies underlying the actions of relevant educational institutions, public and private agencies, political parties, and pressure groups;
- * the policies proclaimed and practiced by these groups;
- * the power bases within the community;
- * the unmet needs of individuals and organizations within the community;
- * emerging trends within the community;
- * means and lines of communication within the community;
- * the history of the issue currently under discussion;

* strategies which have proved effective or ineffective in the past. (Ashworth, 1985, p. 103)

Ashworth's substantive list offers a rich context for syllabus design. And in this sense, she reaffirms the IBE's assessment that teachers' "concrete action on reality" and the subsequent methods employed in the classroom are mutually reinforcing. Through advocacy and public participation in the community, ESL teachers are better positioned to select pertinent topics and language methodologies that more effectively develop critical language skills for public life. Conversely, through dialogue and negotiation in the classroom, both teachers and students are better able to identify and promote their interests in the public sphere. Both in pedagogical and participatory terms, the rationale for advocacy and active citizenship on the part of ESL teachers is a strong one. Yet this grounded and expanded approach remains largely unrealized in most Canadian ESL contexts, which is the subject of the following theoretical discussion.

2.2.2 Canadian ESL Citizenship Instruction: Discourses of Passivity?

One particularly troubling aspect of Canadian ESL citizenship education remains constant in spite of the clarity of the critical analyses and suggestions provided by the authors above. How is it that despite considerable theoretical work, innovative materials development for teachers (see Cameron & Derwing, 1996; Sauvé & Sauvé 1997), and official statements of intent from government,

active and critical ESL citizenship lessons are the noted exception rather than the rule? In my opinion, to assign sole responsibility to government, as Derwing seems to suggest in regards to The Citizenship Act, is too reductive. Sears and Hughes (1996), for example, indicate that there is considerable support in provincial education documents for more participatory orientations. Perhaps it is better to see the activities of government as something more ambivalent than covert or surreptitious in regards to policy implementation and desired outcomes. In the same context, it seems a bit too simplistic to see teachers and coordinators as merely apathetic, misinformed, or expedient regarding the absence of participatory and transformative pedagogies in their programs and lesson plans. And to take up Sauvé's concerns, would improved working conditions make a significant difference? Possibly. But only in part, I believe.

I see the issue as far more intricate and involved than that. And to my mind, no singular determination, ultimate truth, or powerful agent and institution can be readily identified in terms of providing sufficient causal explanation. Rather, what seems more appropriate for my purposes is to expand upon an idea advanced earlier pertaining to Foucault's work around discourses, or more specifically discursive formations, in the context of the citizenship theme. Instead of conceiving of ESL or citizenship education as separate and static disciplines, we might employ Foucault's notion of power/knowledge (see Rouse, 1994) to ask what types of articulations and disjunctions occur when these two fields are momentarily aligned. What immediate and residual effects does this

realignment have on the ways we identify, codify and validate knowledge?

The conceptual frame I propose here is one that is infused with notions of intertextuality, correspondences, diffusion and mutual determination: an "interplay of prohibitions that referred back to one another" (Foucault, 1978, p. 17). What concurring principles, shared priorities easily emerge, or better yet, seem to resonate with our "latent" expectations at the juncture of being both language professionals and Canadian citizens? Based on the topic area of ESL citizenship education, a relevant question Foucault might ask would be, "What are the foundational procedures and constructs in the knowledge base of ESL that encourage our students to reduce all *potential* acts of citizenship to a narrow band of activities equated with the formal process of naturalization?" Or in other words, "How is a test mentality regarding citizenship realized and reinforced through existing ESL traditions?"

In offering my interpretation, by way of an answer, I am inspired by a growing corpus of critical research in applied linguistics (see Benesch, 1993, 1998; Bourne, 1988; Corson, 1997; Cummins, 1996; Lynch, 1996; Pennycook, 1991, 1994; Peirce, 1995; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991; van Lier, 1994). This work, both historically and ideologically sensitive, identifies ESL's modernist foundations, its deep commitment to notions of control, prediction, objectivity and progress based upon natural scientific modes of discovery. In general terms, these authors describe ESL as a discipline overdetermined by cognitive and descriptive language study, and the attendant regulatory ideals and methodological assumptions these biases entail.

Such core values warrant scrutiny and caution from theorists and practitioners alike. I would extend this argument towards the subject at hand by stating that these fundamental assumptions lie just below the surface and are an inseparable aspect of how we, as ESL teachers, codify and transmit knowledge about citizenship.

Let me draw several analogies to illustrate. When Bullard (1989, p. 21) complains that ESL citizenship is reduced to a *static* object to be acquired, one can hear echoes that originated with Saussure's structuralism, his detemporalized (i.e. synchronic) and homogeneous (i.e. *la langue*) treatment of linguistic analysis (see Howatt, 1984). There is a sense of convergent knowledge forms, or "systems", in this unsatisfactory state of affairs, where the object to be mastered -- be it democracy or language -- is finite and achieved through the cumulative acquisition of discrete, graded items (e.g. from entry to citizenship, enumeration, and ultimately a place at the ballot box), not unlike the underlying cognitive suppositions that generate synthetic syllabus designs in ESL (see Nunan, 1988), or the standardized tests used to assess this process.

This structuralist analogy might be extended further. Consider the *syntagmatic* construction of nationhood: a linear chain of definitive events and heroic individuals, the national significance of each explained in relation to what has transpired before and after. Note the progressivism inferred, the manifest destiny implied, where core national values are decisively selected to the exclusion of others at a given critical moment. At each historical instance, a clear distinction between right and wrong -- between presences and absences (cf. Saussure's *paradigmatic* relationships) -- is proclaimed.

Note how easily such conceptual frames induce rote memorization of monumental dates and facts as a preferred classroom methodology.

Other interdiscursive or correlative values might be construed here. For example, when Derwing (1992, p. 193) criticizes the establishment of a test mentality, one can identify the conceptual tools of positivism, which decontextualize, objectify, and generalize knowledge forms into the types of atomized and easily measurable and quantifiable test constructs she denounces. In this regard, critical researchers can recognize an effect that parallels the outcomes generated by mainstream SLA research. These conceptual tools, to paraphrase Foucault (1982, p. 216), simultaneously individualize and totalize language learning, isolating the particular student from the social power relations that promote or discourage language use while at the same time judging the student's performance based on essentialized and reductive categories of SLA. Success and failure in L2 proficiency is then confined to affective explanations of "intrinsic qualities measured against "fixed norms of 'appropriacy'" (Bourne, 1988, p. 88); causative social conditions become muted. Based on this type of theorizing, language lessons are often weighted towards confidence-building rather than critical analyses of the specific social and institutional power relations that produce subject positions of isolation, self-doubt and resigned gratitude for the table scraps of a relentless market rationality (see Cummins, 1996; Peirce [Norton] 1995, 1997; Tollefson, 1991). Passive citizenship is a simple extension of such practices.

Similar analogies are not short in supply. One final one here, and perhaps the most provocative, refers to the extensive research

pertaining to *behaviorist, nativist* and *interactionist* accounts in SLA theory (see Ellis, 1985, pp. 127-129, 1993; Krashen, 1988).

Specifically, what values are foregrounded and simultaneously displaced when language is metaphorically depicted as "input" and "output" in the debate over the relative importance of innate, mentalistic capacities (e.g. Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device, Allen & Van Buren, 1971, pp. 14-15), experiential variables (i.e. explicit instruction, consciousness-raising), and the degree to which such input is "comprehensible" (Cf. Krashen's *i+1*, Richard-Amato, 1988, pp. 36-40) so that it might be converted to *intake* (Ellis, 1985, p. 159). In these various psychologistic models and dichotomies (e.g. *universal grammar/particular mental grammar*, Cf. Chomsky in Botha, 1989, p. 26; *acquisition/learning*, Cf. Krashen, 1988; *explicit/implicit* and *declarative/procedural* knowledge, Ellis, 1993) language appears almost devoid of substance, a generic product if not a commodity in that its creative and incommensurable qualities are divested in order to insure its convertibility, as theory and method, across time and place. The notion of input offered above privileges that which is tangible and measurable. Based on the demands of measurement, such analytical constructs take on a life of their own in that their indicators and typological descriptors become more "real" - - in their effects on curricula -- than the actual language that generated their inception. Indeed, these constructs might be seen as *simulacra* in the terms conceived by postmodern theorist, Jean Baudrillard. "It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it ... it is the map that engenders the territory" (1983, p. 2).

What also strikes me as significant is how the various conceptual frames employed to depict language as "input" in SLA seem to parallel the analytical models that were used to rationalize industrial production in Taylorism and scientific management (see Braverman, 1974). Both discourses, for example, subdivide larger entities/processes (i.e. language, labour) seeking "optimal states" within subsystems through the habituation of instrumental tasks.³ While Taylorism dissociates the labour process from the skills of the worker (Braverman 1974, p. 113), SLA dissociates meaning "value" from the unique, personalized experiences and contexts in which utterances (Cf. Volosinov/ Bakhtin, 1973) are realized. Similarly, while Taylorism seeks to extend control through each step of the production process, SLA theory seeks to extend control through the sequencing and integration of language elements in syllabus design and classroom materials. And further the issue of control, both discourses employ the disinterested and objectifying rhetoric of positivistic science (see Lakoff, 1990), which would be the exclusive

³ For example, note the descriptors employed in Ellis' (1993) discussion on the role of grammar instruction in SLA: "One of the assumptions of traditional language teaching methods based on a structural syllabus is that explicit knowledge become implicit knowledge through practice. According to this view, learners *automatize* or *proceduralize* knowledge that is initially explicit by doing grammar activities" (p. 95, italics in original). Not to take away from the validity of Ellis' typology, but in terms of discourses and rhetorical strategies, it is interesting to note that "automatization" and development of "implicit, procedural knowledge" through repetition were also highly desirable values/skills, if not interchangeable descriptors, in regards to the goals of scientific management. And in contemporary business terms, the modeling of human-environmental relationships in terms of "strong" and "weak interfaces", in Ellis' typology (ibid.), would not be out of place in any management design applying ergonomic and cybernetic principles (see Bateson, 1979; Harries-Jones, 1995).

domain of a "managerial" class, to abstract and codify the essential elements of these processes.

The pertinent question regarding "input", to my mind, is "What do we actually mean in terms of expressing and challenging the *social* realities ESL students confront?" Does the analogy of industrial production, which I have insinuated, seem beyond any credibility for the ESL profession? Van Lier (1995) would appear to share similar concerns when he notes that far too many ESL textbooks treat the target language like a "product, itemized and inventoried, and proceed to 'cover' as much as possible in successive lessons. Language exploration, using the real world as a textbook, is thus made impossible" (p.114). Leki and Carson (1997) offer a similar critique of ESL skills-based, writing materials that "function to infantilize our students, denying them a stance of engagement with serious and compelling subject matter" (p. 63).

Correspondences between routinized language curricula and political passivity are made stronger still in Benesch's (1993) critique of the "ideology of pragmatism" that pervades many ESL and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) writing programs. Most traditional EAP programs, as noted by Benesch, fill their course schedules with the transmission of putatively "core" writing skills and academic discourse conventions, whose mastery precludes the active and critical engagement of students. Drawing on similar studies made by Tollefson (1986), Auerbach (1991), and Auerbach and Burgess (1985), Benesch (1993) notes that the implicit function of such standardized and neutralized curricula is to orient "students toward

modest goals, as cheap labor, compliant workers, and passive citizens in U.S. society" (p. 709).

Is it really so surprising that many ESL teachers and program coordinators, who have been immersed in the knowledge base of the discipline through their own TESL training, find nothing unusual in the equation of citizenship with the processes of naturalization? By this I wish to emphasize that pacifying curricula in ESL do not exist simply from neglect or unprofessional conduct. Indeed, they flourish *because of* professionalism, or conventional wisdom, a desire to be accepted by peers and to do what is right based upon the self-perception of one's identity or one's subjectivity as constructed through the dominant discourses of ESL. At issue here is a notion of power exercised not by physical force, rule-governed edict or individual authority but through personal experience, desire, and interpellation: a psychological and social coming to knowledge, which necessarily excludes other possible ways of knowing. In Foucault's (1977) words,

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (1977, p. 194)

In drawing attention to these ideas around discourse, subjectivity, power/knowledge and our treatment of ESL citizenship, it has been my intention to generate tension and textual dissonance as much as to discover it. I would not want to overestimate the extent of this

particular theoretical argument in terms of defining the problem at hand. Instead I see this discussion as an example of Freirean problem-posing, in which the expectation is not to provide straightforward solutions but to move the dialogue in directions that potentially and ultimately reveal the totality of a particular "limit-situation" (1997, p. 85). Critical language skills, student value orientations, teacher advocacy, and linking methods to community practices, are all crucially important in developing critical democratic citizenship. Yet the final and perhaps most elusive factor in this important goal is attained, if at all, through analyses that are more introspective in nature, examining the taken for granted things we do in the classroom in order to find out *why* we take them for granted, and why they seem to fit so neatly into our prior expectations and experiences. I would concur with Cummins (1996, p. 236) that coercive relations of power are not always self-evident or based on adversarial, zero-sum relationships. Sometimes they are (re)produced, often inadvertently, through the micro-interactions of classroom life: the curricular choices we make and don't make, and the roles and responsibilities we define for ourselves as teachers and ultimately as citizens.

The types of linkages I have made and the interdiscursive power relations I have identified are either muted or absent in the texts I have cited regarding ESL citizenship in Canada. What concerns me in this case is that the critical focus on methods called for by the various authors may fall short of expectations as a consequence. The key reason is that when methods are not traced back to the larger paradigmatic and ideological assumptions from which they logically

derive (see Guba, 1990; Lynch, 1996), a kind of "false" transparency can be assumed, resulting in a series of ad hoc and often superficial adjustments. As Paulo Freire (1997) cautioned, "When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality" (p. 85). Nor should they expect to change it, as a result.

While some might believe that analyses of SLA theory, positivist research methods, structural description, syllabus design, etc. (i.e. the knowledge base of applied linguistics) are extraneous to a discussion of ESL citizenship curricula, I would reiterate my argument that, hardly neutral, these ways of knowing and acting are implicated in the types of pacifying effects critiqued above. Certainly not in whole, but in part, the explanation I have offered in this section may explain the disappointing discrepancies between the existing literature and program implementation to date. If we are to redress such discrepancies in ESL, we may need to look at some of their implications in the areas of teacher education and teacher research. Specifically, we may need to help teachers identify the "micro-politics" of a particular research setting; that is, the convergence of beliefs, values, and program restrictions which simultaneously constrain and enable critical citizenship practices. Moreover, we may need to help teachers reconceptualize the basic purposes, procedures, and responsibilities of participatory, classroom research in ways that potentially support such activities. The next chapter takes up these issues in the context of the program where ESL lessons on the Quebec referendum took place.

CHAPTER 3
TEACHER RESEARCH
IN A COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PROGRAM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will look more closely at some of the implications for teacher research that arise from the conceptual model elaborated in chapter one and the specific issue of citizenship as explored in chapter two. Much of the theory that has inspired my conceptual approach is characteristic of the postmodern turn in social scientific thought. One of the tensions that arises when constructing postmodern-inspired texts pertains to how one simultaneously conforms to, yet problematizes, academic genre conventions regarding sequencing, cohesion, authenticity in representation, and the drawing of conclusions based on one's research (see Canagarajah, 1996; Hutcheon, 1989; Rosenau, 1992). The problem can be formulated in another way: To what extent, if at all, can postmodern notions of indeterminacy, provisionality, and anti-foundationalism, to name but a few (Hasan, 1985, Table 1, pp. 123-124), coexist alongside modernist principles of systematicity, universality and scientific rationality -- especially in the context of producing a dissertation?

Mehan (1995, p. 244) is one of many (see Child et al., 1995; Chow, 1998, pp. 40-41; Constan, 1998) to acknowledge the postmodern perils of "radical reflexivity" in education, when "progress" and "truth" are depicted as merely arbitrary, non-referential products of a particular discourse or "language game"

(Cf. Wittgenstein), and all forms of research are characterized as "texts", constructed differently but from equally valid perspectives. Some teachers might feel that once they acknowledge the partiality and ideologies previously "hidden" within their own teaching, they no longer have the right to speak out or to critique other social practices. Similarly, they might assume that within postmodernism the primary work of education is continuous deconstruction of the language they use and the classroom practices they prefer. But in following this path too rigidly, everything becomes relativized out of fear of unwittingly imposing yet another oppressive educational practice on minority students. Such self-imposed passivity, however, would actually work against the important role that education can play in terms of identifying and achieving collective goals and moral imperatives across boundaries of social difference. Ironically, according to Conostas (1998, p. 28), such effects of extreme relativism would also be contrary to the liberatory intentions of postmodern icons such as Lyotard and Foucault.

As noted by Conostas (1998) "the discourse of postmodernism itself does not advocate the complete devaluation of modernist varieties of knowledge" (p. 28). In his view, if postmodernism is to be of service to education, researchers within this framework must commit to specific positions, guidelines and recommendations that teachers might employ in their classrooms. Based on personal experience, I would also add that mastery and demonstration of the postmodern vernacular, on its own, should not be expected to win over too many converts in the field of ESL. If we are to persuade our colleagues as to the "value" (i.e. critical, aesthetic, inspirational, or

pragmatic) of these types of textual practices, then we need to account for the messy, empirical details and compromises that give them their substance.

For a community-based ESL pedagogy, one key application of postmodern principles is to conceive of theory and practice as mutually informing and subject to ongoing (re)conceptualization based on situated accounts of classroom teaching (see Candlin, 1998). Research, in this perspective, must accord equal attention to both the conceptual (reflexive) and implementational (transformative) dimensions of community pedagogy, as outlined in chapter one. Traditional positivist approaches, in contrast, presume that effective practice should be deduced from a set of generalized principles previously established and verified through experimental design procedures in which control, prediction, and generalizability are preeminent values (see Freeman & Richards, 1993; Guba, 1990; Harré & Gillet, 1994; Lather, 1986; Lynch, 1996; Tompkins, 1998, pp. 7-8). This *preordinate*, or "constructed before the fact" approach (see Lynch, 1996, p. 14; Lincoln, 1990) has been identified as an overarching presence in what Canagarajah (1996, p. 323) describes as a "triumphalist movement" in the reporting of research in ESL: tentative hypotheses leading to research inquiry, discovery of results, and their consideration in light of tacit and a priori theoretical models, all subtly advanced through rhetorical criteria of detachment, induction, and objectification (see also "hypothetico-deductive" methods in scientific explanation, Harré & Gillet, 1994, pp. 9-12).

Much action research in ESL has been similarly configured (see Day, 1990; Nunan, 1990; 1991). For those who have been introduced to this approach through applied linguistics, it is somewhat surprising to learn that action research was originally linked to issues of social change and empowerment in the workplace (Freeman & Richards, 1993, p. 203; Gore, 1993). As incorporated in ESL, action research is often perceived as a kind of fine-tuning or supplement to more "substantive" methods and theories generated from scientific-empirical data. The parameters often assumed for this mode of inquiry are that its primary function is to inform and guide one's pedagogy and only incidentally, to affirm or refute pre-existing theories. Rarely is pedagogy seriously considered as legitimate to theory formation in its own right (see Clarke, 1994; Gore, 1993; Morgan, 1997b; van Lier, 1994). Even amongst many cultural theorists and critical pedagogues, according to Giroux (1994), the importance of pedagogy seems inadequately understood as a determinative force in (re)constituting identities and sociocultural practices, an oversight I attempt to redress elsewhere (Morgan, 1997a, 1998).

The tricky problem then relates to how we might organize a description of pedagogy in ways that potentially overturn the predictive function and superordinate role assigned to theory. More specifically, how might we textually depict a research approach exemplified by the following quote from van Lier (1994): "Theory is not something that is constructed and subsequently applied to practice. Instead, it is nothing but a reflexive dimension of practice" (p. 338). The approach I have taken is not entirely satisfying or

authentic in terms of depicting the dynamic interplay of theorizing, implementation, and reformulation that frequently and spontaneously occurs in and outside class. But what I set out to do in the following chapters is select particular moments or junctures in the classroom narrative, where I provide a detailed account of how a specific theory has directly informed an experience or is alternatively (re)conceptualized based on the same.

Another important concern pertains to the way in which seemingly innocent conceptual and organizational matters can become implicated in ideological practices. As mentioned in chapter one, the notion of community is fraught with contradictions and intended ambiguities. The promotion of "community values" at times might be recognized as a nostalgic and rearguard action against the contemporary, alienating changes that undermine our tenuous sense of group affiliation and continuity. Such activities often come at a social cost, which Giddens (1994) identifies as the capacity for traditional forms of solidarity to "crush individual autonomy and exert a compelling pressure towards conformism" (p. 126).

Where procedure and design become implicated here are in the community values selectively foregrounded or subsumed as a consequence of the parameters we set for our research. As Tom Popkewitz (1990) notes, "The organization of data posits assumptions about society, such as that the world should be considered as in equilibrium or in conflict or people as rational or irrational" (p. 60). In the context of micro-analyses characteristic of case studies, classroom ethnography, and action research, Popkewitz cautions that the immediacy and detail of such encounters have an explanatory

potency that can serve as a "symbolic canopy", promoting a "linguistic structure that emphasizes a negotiated order and participation in a community. In doing so, the prior assumptions and historical conditions in which the interactions occurred are taken for granted" (Popkewitz, 1990, p. 60).

What Popkewitz draws our attention to is the potential conservatism advanced when we disconnect our immediate classroom impressions and those of our students from the complex and dynamic power relations that have and continue to influence local organizations, community values, and larger social institutions. Microanalyses framed in this limited way can easily revert to essentialized categories of identity to compensate for the perceived absence of more tangible or direct causality. In terms of essentialization, the integrative and cohesive functions of "community" are quite likely to be overemphasized. In classic sociological terms, we then become participants in an act of reification, where a particular research method inadvertently endows the notion of community with its own "collective consciousness" (Cf. Durkheim; see Giddens, 1971; Nisbet, 1966) distinct from and greater than the sum of its parts. Once we align ourselves, as teachers and researchers, to this idea of a community as having a "life of its own" or as a cohesive aggregate of shared values passed down intact over generations, we are less likely to imagine any possibilities for exploring and improving community relations through classroom pedagogy. In this way, Giddens' pessimistic observation regarding conformism becomes somewhat self-fulfilling.

3.2. COMPLICATING FACTORS FOR CLASSROOM RESEARCH

In general terms, I would describe my research approach as combining elements of both *action research* and *classroom ethnography*. My purposes coincide with the former in that the primary motivation for action research is to generate *applied* knowledge, an experimentation with ideas and theories for a particular teaching environment (Nunan, 1990, p. 63; Gebhard et al, 1990). The "emic" perspectives of those who ultimately benefit from or endure the conversion of data into curricula are seen as an important counterbalance to a teacher's partial view. Thus the need for ethnography, which is premised on the belief that the perceptions of the "observed" constitute theoretical constructs. Cherryholmes (1988) describes this as a phenomenological switch from first order to second-order constructs: "What were formerly objects of study become subjects of meaning making" (p. 108).

Cherryholmes' point is neither an original nor contemporary one. The social anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, who is credited with having pioneered modern ethnographic fieldwork methods in the Trobriand islands some eighty years ago, emphasized the need to collect different types of data -- employing different techniques for each -- which might better balance the ethnographer's observation of events with social actors' perceptions of them and the meaning or value systems that shaped and contextualized these perceptions (Kuper, 1973, pp. 27-30). Malinowski, as well, was one of the first ethnographers to seek out systematic and theoretical explanations for the discrepancies between the norms professed by social actors

and the many instances of their evasion or manipulation by the same (ibid.) (Cf. Bourdieu's "theory of practice").

Various mitigating factors or potential threats to validity and objectivity in ethnographic research have been documented. For one, there is the danger of conflating "facts" with observed phenomena when direct links between action and meaning are presumed. As noted by Erickson (1986), "the possibility is always present that different individuals may have differing interpretations of the meanings of what, in physical form, appear to be the same or similar objects or behaviors" (p. 126) (see also Geertz, 1973). A second source of ambiguity may arise during personal interviews in that some meanings and social events are so "common" to participants that they are not consciously appraised nor delimited in ways presumed by the researcher (Erickson, 1986). Although such meanings may be directly unobtainable, they are at the same time integral to the ways that people understand and respond to their social world, hence their "commonality".

A third factor comes from Giddens (1994), who notes that "inaccessible" meanings may be too horrible in scale to be "tested out according to the usual procedures of science" (p. 219). Giddens' observation would have particular relevance when working with ESL students whose lives have been shattered by warfare, brutality, privation and forced migration. A telling anecdote comes by way of the Toronto Star (March 19, p. A7), which ran an article on Phan Thi Kim Phuc, who was the primary subject of perhaps the most infamous photograph of the Vietnam War, a picture of terrified children fleeing a napalm attack on their village. Now living in

Canada, she was quoted as saying that "she was tired of being used as a propaganda symbol by the Vietnamese authorities," and "It is wonderful to be in Canada, but I have suffered so much that I have to think very carefully about what I say" (Toronto Star, March 19, p. A7). Such comments and experiences, not uncommon to ESL classrooms, explain the reluctance of some to participate in research and the limitations of findings based on overt expression and observed phenomena.

Experiences such as Phan's help identify another important issue for teacher research. Specifically, if and when "horrible stories" are expressed, how should we "witness" or respond to them (see Simon & Eppert, 1997; Simon & Armitage-Simon, 1995)? In the face of unexpected testimony, do we slavishly follow preconfigured rules of research in order to ensure the reception of our ideas amongst academic peers? Simon and Eppert (1997) suggest otherwise, stating that the requirements of witnessing means that "testimony is no longer grasped only as a datum, an empirical referent to be assessed in terms of what one already knows" (p. 180). These authors describe our ethical and professional obligations in terms of the need to let such stories be told and the limitations of judging them through impersonal, standardized criteria. Of specific importance for community programs, they emphasize the importance of evaluating such stories both compassionately and pedagogically with the potential of informing and transforming social life in the present. In my own experience, these types of concerns were an important aspect of lessons on the Gulf War that took place in a community program in which I was employed (see Morgan, 1997b; 1998). One of

the most important and memorable events took place when my adult students met with a grade 7 class to share their experiences of surviving wars and revolutions. For my students, the difficulties of remembering were balanced by the need to share personal stories which might counterbalance the trivialization -- the atmosphere of a video arcade -- of death and destruction as presented in the mainstream media.

A fourth complicating factor in classroom ethnography revolves around the fact that the observer is actually observing the effects of his or her presence. Classroom researchers often believe that they can account for this situation by careful scrutiny of their own research biases. They conduct their work based on the assumption that research should and can be a benign and politically neutral activity. Moreover, they would suggest that failure to achieve the desired level of personal detachment and "objectivity" was one of application rather than premise (see Day, 1990). However, what is far more problematic and difficult to ascertain are the meanings that participant observation and documentation evoke in ESL students, many of who come from societies where classroom research methods can inadvertently parallel forms of political surveillance.

I can elaborate on this point based on personal experience. In my own class, there have been instances when nervous students have revised or "forgotten" unguarded comments in the face of my curiosity. Some have mentioned their uncertainty regarding the permanence of their legal status, especially if they transgress public ordinances and relatively insignificant laws (e.g. jaywalking, undeclared tips on taxes). Others have hinted about fears of

retribution against family and friends back home as a result of a politically sensitive comment. Indeed, such fears were evident during the unit on citizenship and the Quebec referendum. The future of Hong Kong after 1997 was the context against which Quebec-Canadian developments were being assessed. In class, during a rather pessimistic appraisal of the former, one of my older students suddenly responded in a surprised voice: "Oh, I wouldn't dare say that." When I asked why, she exclaimed, "I'm scared of the communists of course!" Interestingly, nobody suggested that her concern -- expressed from within the ostensibly secure surroundings of a Canadian classroom -- might be irrational or overblown. While she was certainly the most candid and expressive on this topic, she was not the only one who was hedging their bets on the future and guarding their comments accordingly.

Silence in the classroom may go beyond sensitivity to a specific topic and reflect a more general and deep suspicion that some students have of the fundamental assumptions and motivations behind classroom research. Such possibilities are verified in Giltrow and Calhoun's (1992) provocative article on Mayan resistance to ESL orthodoxy: "While we have learned a little about their assumptions, they have learned a lot about ours. They have learned that, in this community where English is the first language of most people, institutional/cultural traditions value practices which trigger language behavior and capture it for the purpose of measuring its deviation from a norm. They reject this tradition and resist" (p.62). The experiences that these authors sketch out in their work with the Mayan community sound all too eerily like Orwell's infamous Big

Brother in 1984 or the omnipresent "panopticism" described by Foucault (1977) in *Discipline and Punish*. But the reality, for ESL professionals, hits closer to home. In what might be seen as a rearguard action in today's ESL marketplace of ideas, these students are resisting the expanding domain of ever more refined and adaptable research technologies, which make "incursions into domains previously inaccessible to quantitative assessment" (Giltrow & Calhoun, 1992, p. 56). As mentioned earlier, this doesn't necessarily mean that new research technologies should be resisted outright because they are intrinsically dangerous or useless for community programs, based on Giltrow and Calhoun's experience. Rather, following Foucault's perspective on power/knowledge relations, they are always *potentially* dangerous precisely because of their usefulness in expanding the range of activities, thoughts and behaviors that can be made visible, codified, and normalized within the discipline of ESL (see Gutting, 1994, p. 25).

Sometimes the effects of a researcher's presence are manifest in completely opposite forms. Instead of silence, a teacher-researcher can find students who appear almost too forthright and surprisingly corroborative of even the most speculative hypotheses. Some students come from societies in which legal status, employment or living conditions are individually negotiated and rarely subject to impersonalized or institutional governance. Individuals and families rely on building informal networks to obtain favorable conditions (see Boissevain, 1985; King, 1991). ESL teacher-researchers can be seen as potential mentors in a new country, and the desire to satisfy their expectations can have some bearing on the information

provided. But to see this situation solely in terms of utility or strategic calculation would be an ethnocentric assumption. As noted by Corson (1990, pp. 249-250), supportive social bonds or *ligatures* between people are seen as "positive ends in themselves" in some cultural groups. In many situations, students are aware that they are part of an "experiment" (Cf. "the Hawthorne effect", Lynch, 1996, p. 47). Their willingness to provide the requisite information that a researcher exuberantly seeks, however imagined or fictitious it may be, could reflect a desire to cultivate good relations and proper social etiquette between interlocutors.

The tendency in the ESL literature has been to depict the various complicating factors outlined above as superficial or of marginal consequence in the collection and interpretation of data in second language acquisition. A couple of reasons come to mind. One would be the division of labour between theorists and practitioners in the ESL profession (see Clarke, 1994; Crookes, 1998; Pennycook, 1989; Morgan, 1997a). The knowledge base of ESL almost exclusively reflects the experiences and values of the former, mostly academics that work in competitive educational environments where the underlying inducements for student-respondents to cooperate and provide material evidence of learning (e.g. video or tape recordings, portfolios) are strong. In community programs, where there are often neither fees nor grades and where there are always pressures to maintain attendance figures amidst competing programs nearby, proposing a research project can be hazardous: Students may simply drop out rather than risk expressing the reasons why they don't want to participate. Thus the likelihood of community practitioners

contributing "hard data" on language learning -- through methods of prolonged observation and intrusive forms of documentation (i.e. tape and video recording) -- would be reduced.

Yet the most significant reason, in my estimation, would still be the predominant view in applied linguistics that language is essentially a closed system modeled after the natural sciences and concerned primarily with invariant cognitive properties of language learners. In this worldview, both the merits and ethical dimensions of a specific research methodology are assessed intrinsically and autonomously. The ethical component, in particular, may reflect abstract and universal principles regarding inalienable rights and the human condition or, alternatively, a code of conduct or idealized procedures characteristic of Habermas's "discourse ethics" (see Benyabib, 1990; Corson, 1993; Wellmer, 1991). In contrast, when we think of language as fundamentally a *social practice* (Fairclough, 1989; Janks, 1991; 1997a; 1997b), then critical and ethical scrutiny becomes extrinsic and provisional as well, based on how a particular research approach articulates with the politics of the moment and place and how it might enable the research participants themselves to learn about and potentially resist or transform the social forces that structure their lives. Such an approach can be characterized as "openly ideological" research (Lather, 1986), to which we might rhetorically add, "What is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious practice of freedom?" (Foucault, 1997, p. 284).

This "conscious practice of freedom," to which Foucault alludes, might have a fairly substantive function in addressing the "complicating factors" that can arise during research on ESL

citizenship. As social practices go, critical citizenship is an especially intense and often impassioned activity in that it can disrupt established modes of authority in the family, community, and society. These norms may directly pertain to when, where, and for whom, political discourse is allowed. Or, as I have discussed around the issue of community policing (Morgan, 1998), such power relations may involve sanctions against public statements and actions that counter intragroup loyalties against the legal and ethical norms of the dominant society. Often, critical moments in the classroom can arise when traditional "rules" that define students' identities are examined, affirmed or resisted in light of new social possibilities. But these critical moments can also be dangerous, in that public acts of transgression can threaten the limited support networks that immigrants and refugees rely upon to survive in a competitive and impersonal economy often hostile to their interests.

Against this backdrop, a research ethics defined by abstract and universal codes might position certain students in ways that either jeopardize this support or distract from the pedagogical activities intended to encourage active and critical awareness. For example, prior to a study, most research projects have students sign official permission forms that outline the scope of inquiry, research techniques employed, and include the option of withdrawing at any time. Nonetheless, for many of the reasons outlined above, many students may feel that it is either impolite or imprudent to refuse or to be seen refusing a request to participate. Moreover, given the diversity of student's textual experiences, it is uncertain whether ESL students are entirely aware of the nature of the proposed inquiry as

framed by the particular academic and bureaucratic genre that characterizes such formal requests. Thus, when particularly threatening subject matter or comments unexpectedly emerge in class, it is rare for a student to say publicly, "Stop the tape; I'm leaving." What is more likely to occur is for the same student to become preoccupied with caution and distanced from whatever transpires during the remainder of the class. I do not mean to suggest here that we abandon the guidelines for ethical protocol that currently exist, for they are extremely important, but rather that we always remain alert ("the conscious practice of freedom") to the specific situations, interpersonal relationships, and unexpected developments in which *freedom* from observation and documentation become necessary for critical citizenship practices. Arguably, the degree to which conformity to design impedes critical exploration in the classroom might be seen as consistent with the pacifying effects of ESL that I have sketched out in chapter two.

Finally, it is worth remembering here that whatever claims to objectivity made on behalf of classroom research or ethnography come at a time when the discipline which invented its terms of reference, anthropology, is fundamentally rethinking the purpose and even the possibility of this type of activity (see Marcus, 1986; Canagarajah, 1996). Ironically, "while anthropologists have been moving in the direction of experimentation, ... educational researchers have been moving to systematize ethnographic research in an attempt to make it more scientific, often invoking the language of positivism to do so" (Anderson, 1989, p. 252). Authors such as Clifford (1988) and Geertz (1983) see the ethnographic encounter as

more likely to provide researchers with an opportunity to learn about their own "hidden" cultural assumptions. In their perspective, ethnography is *fundamentally* interpretive, a form of self-fashioning which must be seen within the unique historical and cultural development of Western society, which has equated scientific method with truth and has often sought out verification of its perceived superiority through its research imperatives (see Said, 1978; Kuper, 1973, Ch. 4).

3.3 "OPENLY IDEOLOGICAL RESEARCH": DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

Based on the types of research concerns I have already noted, my intention has been to compile a data set that broadens the potential meanings derived from and attributed to immediate classroom experiences and observations. These wider configurations or sets of determining factors (e.g. local, societal and historical; see Ashworth, 1985, p. 103) are then examined in light of how they might be mediated or transformed through pedagogy. And based on direct pedagogical experience, (re)formulation of theory is made with possible generalizations to other contexts and programs considered.

A fundamental assumption underlying my efforts is that the reality we seek to know cannot be apprehended objectively or independently of our particular historical and cultural experiences, nor isolated from values that are indelible features of the instruments and evaluative tools we employ. Knowledge, in this perspective, is not something just "out there" awaiting our discovery,

as it is always a product of our interventions, necessitating researchers to critically reflect upon the political positions and ethical dimensions supported and implicated through their work (see Anderson, 1989, pp. 254-255; Canagarajah, 1996; Cummins, 1996; Lather, 1986; Lemke, 1987, p. 221; Morgan, 1997, pp. 436-438; Simon & Dippo, 1986).

If we presume, in a constructivist sense (see Guba, 1990; Lincoln, 1990; Lynch, 1996), that there is no "factual", objective or unitary world outside of our perceptions and analytical models, or as critical realists propose (see Bhaskar, 1989; Corson, 1991, 1993; Lynch, 1996), we accept the existence of an independent, naturalistic reality but recognize that our apprehension of it will always be partial and value-laden, does this mean that our critical and transformative accounts of practice are merely anecdotal, a reflection of an "anything goes" relativism. Patti Lather (1986) has persuasively argued that this need not be the case. She calls for the "reconceptualization of validity appropriate for research openly committed to a more just social order" (p. 66). Both she and Brian Lynch (1996), provide a set of guidelines or alternative validity criteria with which we might protect and promote the integrity of such research as well as evaluate the effectiveness of programs that serve the types of social and political priorities I have identified for a community-based ESL pedagogy.

I would like to describe a number of techniques Lynch (1996, p. 67) identifies for conducting *naturalistic* inquiry⁴ and explain how

⁴ According to Lynch (1996), "naturalistic validity has to do with the degree to which the evaluator and the evaluation audience place trust and confidence in the evaluation analysis and conclusions. In comparison to the positivist notion

they were specifically realized in this thesis. In addition, I will expand upon specific data in the context of what Guba and Lincoln (1989) call *authenticity criteria* for research and evaluation (see also Cumming, 1996, pp. 3-4; Guba, 1990; Lather, 1986; Lynch, 1996).

Two prominent techniques for assessing and increasing validity would be notions of *thick description* and *triangulation*. Thick description is an approach that gained prominence through the interpretive anthropology of Clifford Geertz (1973, 1983). Characteristic of Geertz's ethnographic style is an elaborate description of minute particulars around an event or ritual (e.g. a Balinese cockfight, 1973) followed by evaluation and further hypotheses based on its articulation with larger cultural and historical texts. Inspired by this approach, the next chapter combines a detailed account of the setting (e.g. the specific community centre) where the ethnographic event (i.e. the unit on the Quebec referendum) took place. As well, direct accounts of critical citizenship lessons (e.g. participant observation notes kept in a journal, examples of students' oral and written work) are correlated with official policies and historical events at the settlement agency. To this end, in-house documents and informal interviews (some tape-recorded, others documented from memory) with staff and peers were used. In addition, activities at the centre are interrelated with the dynamic negotiation of a new political identity for Chinese Canadians in the greater society. Adding to this perspective, the ambivalent and

of validity as a congruence between evaluation findings and some objective reality, this perspective on validity emphasizes the degree to which the evaluator and evaluation audience can agree on, and feel confident about, an interpretation of the evaluation findings" (p. 65).

sometimes oppressive aspects of Canadian multicultural practices are brought to bear in the evaluation of data and the selection of pedagogical strategies for the classroom. Both the local English and Chinese media (one of the local Chinese papers, *Ming Pao*, translates several of its editorials into English) were rich sources of data to complement interviews and observation notes. In the context of generating a conceptual framework for other programs, thick description parallels the positivist notion of external validity, providing in-depth and richly contextualized accounts of practices, which help guide other teachers in selectively modifying or transposing salient features across settings.

Triangulation involves the gathering of data from different sources, techniques, or even theoretical perspectives as a means of better understanding and reconciling convergences and discrepancies in one's research (see Corson, 1990, p. 33; Erickson, 1986; Lather, 1986, p. 67; Lynch, 1996, pp. 59-61). For alternative or critical research purposes, the varied perspectives of triangulated data help reduce what in positivist research methods are identified as threats to internal validity. Triangulation can provide an important counterbalance to the overbearing literalism that some classroom ethnographies and narrative inquiries tend towards as a result of the assumed authenticity such personalized (i.e. confessional) modes of data collection infer (see Conchas, 1998). Also, in contrast to the positivist approach, where divergent data may represent significant validity threats which would need to be overcome, triangulated discrepancies in naturalistic enquiry (Cf. "openly ideological research", Lather, 1986) open up our understanding to differentiated

relationships of power and experience within a particular field setting and subsequently guide the pedagogical activities we might develop (Cf. *multiple perspective negotiation*, Lynch, 1996, pp. 62-63). In this sense, one of the main purposes of triangulation might be to develop a broader perspective with which to build trust amongst different program stakeholders and inform collective action outside of the agency.

Such strategies and developments are consonant with the values and rules for naturalistic research proposed by Guba and Lincoln (cited in Lynch, 1996, pp. 64-65). One pertinent account related to ESL citizenship education is elaborated upon in this chapter and revolves around consulting students to sign a petition. In short, the time allotted for discussion of the issue was far too brief. Several teachers resented this and believed that the incident was indicative of a patronizing attitude towards the ESL program on the part of the community centre administration. Left unexamined, the issue was certain to exacerbate bad feelings with negative ramifications for the classroom. Built on triangulated data from participant observation notes, official in-house documents, consultation with colleagues, newspaper articles, and a taped interview with a staff member, I recognized that the issue was not just a matter of administrative oversight or indifference but also referenced, in part, larger issues related to forms of traditional authority and the negotiation of a new political identity for Chinese Canadians.

While these tentative hypotheses were emerging, I conducted the interview with an eye towards not only eliciting information

from the perspectives of administration but also promoting the views of the ESL department with particular questions that problem-posed areas of mutual concern and ways to promote better lines of communication in the future. Since this incident, and as a result of the interview process, consultation on substantive political issues related to the ESL department has, at times, modestly improved at the community center. When participation and input from students is required or when important seminars are planned, some staff members make more of an effort to provide adequate preparation time for teachers interested in developing complementary language activities.

As noted by Lather (1986), this type of a research process is "by far the most unorthodox as it flies directly in the face of the essential positivist tenet of research neutrality" (p. 67). But in terms of naturalistic enquiry, it would be characteristic of validity criteria such as *ontological authenticity*, the degree to which research information increases the "understanding and appreciation of the broad range of issues affecting a program," *educative authenticity*, the degree to which particular stakeholders gain an understanding of those outside their group (e.g. administration, ESL teachers and students), and *catalytic authenticity*, "the degree to which something is actually done as a result of evaluation" (Lynch, 1996, pp. 64-65; see also Cumming, 1996, pp. 3-4; Lather, 1986, p. 69).

Several other techniques for increasing naturalistic validity (Lynch, 1996, p. 67) were important components of this chapter and should be briefly mentioned. *Prolonged engagement* in a research setting -- as teacher, researcher, colleague and friend -- was an

important aspect of building the kinds of cross-group relationships necessary to identify and reconcile difficulties and approximate the types of authenticity criteria mentioned above. I would extend the notion of prolonged engagement to include my tenure as a teacher at the Sichuan Foreign Language Institute in Chongqing, People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1987-88. At the community center where I work, this experience could be considered as a form of *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu, 1991) in that it has initiated in-depth discussions, which have helped build beneficial and supportive relationships amongst colleagues and administration. Similarly, it lends a modest degree of professional credibility around discussions of Chinese language learning strategies with colleagues from Hong Kong and the PRC, as well as my students, all of whom claim Chinese ethnicity. Significantly, this experience provided an important critical vantage point with which I assessed the pedagogical relevance of existing literature on Chinese learning strategies, citizenship practices, and political developments in the Chinese-Canadian community as presented in the media.

Throughout the data collection process, emergent hypotheses and classroom applications were discussed in the staff room with my colleagues, a technique called *peer debriefing* by Lynch (1996, p. 67). When an article in the English language press covered stories related to this chapter such as political leadership in the Toronto Chinese community, the Quebec referendum, or China's reacquisition of Hong Kong, I would talk about their substance, ask if they were fairly representative of events, and inquire as to the local Chinese media's coverage of the same issues.

In the context of this chapter, specific language issues and potential classroom approaches were also discussed. Upon request, several colleagues shared some of their own L1 language learning experiences and explained how they approach L2 pedagogy as a result. Specifically, I was interested in issues pertaining to bottom-up or lexis-centred approaches (see Bell, 1995; Parry, 1996) as well as how my colleagues either controlled or incorporated L1 in their ESL lessons. During talks on the latter, a couple of colleagues complained about the criticism that they were receiving from supervisors over the amount of L1 being used and permitted in their classes. My colleagues felt that these negative assessments were unfair in that they did not reflect the age (mostly seniors), learning experiences and values of their students.

Based on naturalistic criteria of ontological, educative and catalytic validity, I rejected a position of detachment and objectivity for my research. As both a longtime stakeholder in the community centre, and as a graduate student at OISE, I drew upon both these experiences in order to challenge the underlying assumptions that disempowered my colleagues and trivialized the learning expectations of their students. I decided to circulate several articles and suggested others which questioned their supervisors' arbitrary assumptions around L1 use in ESL contexts (see Auerbach, 1993; Cummins, 1996; Lucas & Katz, 1994). For those who wished to challenge or debate their supervisors, these texts provided an excellent rationale for bilingual practices in ESL, and one strengthened through the discourse of power in ESL knowledge production (i.e. prestigious publications, academic discourse genre).

For those looking for creative possibilities for L1, many suggestions and further references were included.

Within positivistic enquiry, such activities fundamentally compromise research objectivity and detract from theory formation as an elite, scientific enterprise in which truth claims about the world must be either obeyed or falsified through hypothetico-deductive methods of inquiry. Within a naturalistic approach, however, detachment is always an ideological and ethical position. In my case above, for example, strict adherence to notions of research objectivity would in effect be the same as denying available resources and experiences which might be used by my colleagues to democratize their working relationships at the community centre. At the same time, telling my colleagues what to say or how to read these texts would have probably engendered resentment. ("Another 'expert' telling us what to do.").

It is by no means an easy fence to straddle. As an academic, one is immersed in discursive practices that constitute authority and expertise. The temptation is sometimes there to claim or impose these privileges on the uninitiated. Working in community programs, however, I have become painfully aware of the accelerated de-skilling of ESL teachers taking place. And in this context, my experience as a graduate student has made me sensitive to the ways in which "disinterested" academic research can unwittingly advance its cooptation for agendas that seek to limit or reduce the professional status of practitioners (see Morgan, 1997a; 1998b, van Lier, 1994). So resentment and scepticism of academic research, in my opinion, is not always unfounded. Patti Lather (1986) draws on

Freire's notions of dialogue and problem-posing to provide useful research guidelines for this seemingly contradictory position.

The researcher's role as privileged possessor of expert knowledge must be reconceptualized as that of a catalyst who works with local participants to understand and solve local problems.... Self-determination, hence, requires both the demystification of ideologies that distort dominant and oppressive social relationships and the empowerment of the oppressed so that they can take charge of improving their own situations. (Lather, 1986, p. 73)

In different but parallel ways, Lather's Freirean-inspired description of a researcher's role is pursued and at times realized in this dissertation through various techniques mentioned above. In terms of "demystification", exclusionary language practices around the Quebec referendum are partly unraveled, empowering students to begin to speak out about their new country in ways that challenge and inform conventional wisdom. As a "catalyst", what seems indicative are the moments in which students indirectly drew my attention to the critical possibilities inherent in their traditional learning strategies (e.g. grammar-translation methods, dictionary use, bilingualism, biliteracy, lexis-centred pedagogy). Beginning from somewhat familiar territory, we then explored a number of unfamiliar pathways through which traditional approaches facilitated critical language awareness and a closer reading of contemporary Canadian politics. Based on ESL orthodoxy, many of my colleagues would dismiss the value of such activities, let alone explore their potential in developing critical and active citizenship skills. And finally, through classroom interaction and an intensive focus on vocabulary in the referendum, I began to compare, in a critically

reflexive way, the relative strengths and limitations of both conventional ESL pedagogies for L2 grammar and vocabulary as well as poststructural accounts of language for developing critical citizenship education.

CHAPTER 4
THE BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR
THE CHINESE SETTLEMENT SERVICES AGENCY OF TORONTO

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Much of what transpired in the lessons on the Quebec referendum is a product of the specific characteristics of the community agency where these ESL classes took place and the dominant values of both the local community and broader society within which CSSAT is situated. I begin this chapter by providing background information on the origins of this type of ESL program delivery followed by a more detailed description of the community setting for CSSAT. In this latter section, political transitions in the community and societal setting are interrelated to the agency's own activities and the types of citizenship practices developed in the classroom.

4.2 COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PROGRAMS: ORIGINS

The origins of programs such as CSSAT, which integrate language instruction along with other settlement services, can be traced back to the early 1960s, when the Ontario government created the Newcomer Language Orientation Classes (NLOC) for community agencies (Burnaby, 1992, pp. 22-23). The NLOC program helped establish a pattern of co-sponsorship or partnerships that have been a consistent feature of community-based ESL from the

beginning. Through NLOC, the provincial government provided school boards with the funds to set up classes and provide teachers for local community centres. Around the same time, the federal government also became active in adult ESL through its sponsorship of programs specifically geared towards labour market entry. This federal initiative, much of which took place in community colleges, was criticized for a number of implementational problems (e.g. regimented syllabus design, poor working conditions for teachers) but most of all for being too narrowly targeted towards only those immediately destined for the labour market (Burnaby, 1998).

In 1986, the federal government responded positively to its critics by organizing the Settlement Language Training Program (SLTF), a one-year pilot project specifically designed to provide language instruction for immigrant women not seeking employment outside of the home (Burnaby, 1998, 1988). Part-time ESL programs with provisions for child minding and transportation were set up in a number of immigrant settlement agencies run by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Burnaby, 1998, p. 250). These language courses were offered free of charge to students, but notably without the "training allowances" provided to selected students in labor-entry programs. Burnaby (1998) observes that this pilot project, which was continued as the Settlement Language Program, was exemplary in terms of helping students whose needs and conditions had not been met by other provincial and federal programs:

Each project was unique: some attracted immigrants who had been in the country for as many as 20 years; others attracted isolated and older people; still others in areas where there is

not much immigration reached the kinds of learners that would be served by other federal and provincial programs in high immigration areas; many appealed to people who were not literate in their mother tongue. (Burnaby, 1998, p. 251)

The "uniqueness" of "each project" is to be emphasized here. Then and now, one of the primary strengths of community programs is their ability to identify the needs of particular demographic groups in the society and design specific settlement services for their benefit. The success of these programs should also be considered in a larger societal perspective somewhat unique to the Canadian federation. The longterm vitality of agencies specifically designed to serve constituencies based on ethnicity, race, gender, and class, are in fact important reflections of multicultural policies in Canada. In this regard, settlement agencies such as CCSAT do not view their primary social function in terms of hastening integration or assimilation into the mainstream. Rather, many of the services they provide are designed to preserve and enhance diversity and pluralism, which potentially enriches the society as a whole (see Ricento & Burnaby; 1998; Taylor, 1994; Williams, 1998). In chapter eight, much more will be said about the future of multiculturalism and its influence on community-based ESL programs.

4.2.1 Distinguishing Different Types of Community Agencies

In her assessment of the SLTF program, Burnaby (1988) provides a useful distinction regarding the types of community agencies involved in ESL program delivery. In "mainstream"

agencies, according to Burnaby (1988, pp. 28-29), the ethnic origins of the staff are not relevant to the services provided to the targeted community, which itself would not be defined and delimited in terms of ethnicity. As well, mainstream agencies "usually focus on one particular kind of service such as children's aid, cancer prevention, and so on" (Burnaby, 1998, pp. 29). In contrast, Burnaby (1988) defines "ethnic" agencies as those "run by members of a specific ethnic group for the benefit of others from that same group. The range of services may vary" (Burnaby, 1998, pp. 29).

In Toronto, *Skills for Change* and *St. Stephen's Community House* would appear to be two good examples of mainstream agencies as defined by Burnaby. *Skills for Change* has been especially active in job-training and job-search areas of language instruction. In support of its educational activities, this organization has also been a strong political advocate for foreign-trained professionals, continuously lobbying federal and provincial governments to reduce the obstacles to employment experienced by many newcomers (see *Language Instruction for New Canadians*, 1998; Omidvar, 1997). *St. Stephen's*, in turn, has been directly involved in a number of settlement concerns in downtown Toronto. Along with its strong ESL program, cosponsored with the Toronto Board of Education, *St. Stephen's* has created unique services for younger immigrants such as its Youth Employment Counselling Centre and the Drug-Free Arcade, which is located in the Kensington Market area of the city (Hood, 1995).

In terms of "ethnic" agencies, Burnaby's definition would be a close fit with CSSAT, as I will detail below. At the same time, I would

broaden and qualify this category by noting that several important agencies in Toronto take up the notion of ethnicity as but one element of the social identity of a specific group receiving specialized language and settlement programming. Shared identity between the providers and receivers of language programming is an important criterion to emphasize. Elsa Auerbach (1995), for one, argues that a shared cultural background between teachers and students reinforces both L1 literacy and L2 acquisition. But ethnicity, alone, may not be the major criterion that defines the experiences that a group of students share nor the obstacles they may encounter in Canada.

Two organizations in Toronto come to mind. *New Experiences for Refugee Women* (NEW) is a settlement agency serving Latin American women who have fled violent conditions in their native countries. NEW provides bilingual instruction and a learning environment that is "socially sensitive" to students' lived experiences of gender, class, and political oppression (Merson-Calderon, 1997). Similarly, the *Working Women's Community Centre* (WWCC), could be seen as serving a group with a somewhat homogeneous identity, but ethnicity would be less significant than gender and class criteria in the determination of services offered. A few years ago, this organization celebrated its 20th anniversary of providing ESL classes and employment counseling for immigrant women, especially those of Portuguese and Spanish speaking background (Working Women Community Centre, 1996).

4.2.2 Funding Pressures and Curricular Demands Placed on Community-Based Programs and Teachers

While agencies such as Skills for Change, St. Stephen's Community House, NEW, WWCC, and CSSAT, can look back on many years of consistent community service, the same cannot be easily said for the government programs and sources of funding on which they rely. On the provincial scene, the NLOC program no longer exists; the provincial government funds adult ESL strictly on a per capita basis (based on classroom attendance), and school boards that might want to allocate extra funds for special ESL programs no longer have the legal power to raise property taxes towards that end.

From the federal side, since the early 1990s, most of its funding has been channeled through the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program (LINC). While the federal government can claim that it has increased funds for language instruction through LINC, the fact that refugees and citizens are excluded from the program has been strongly criticized (Burnaby, 1998, pp. 252-253). As well, the relative affluence of LINC programs has had the indirect effect of differentiating "have" and "have not" ESL classes within the same agency. Sometimes, the effects can be divisive and lead to the closing of particular classes.

CSSAT, for instance, has made a number of successful proposals for LINC funding, including the provision of an entire classroom of new computers for the exclusive use of LINC classes. The fact that other non-LINC students are prohibited from the computer room has fueled bad feelings -- over and above the fact that LINC students

also receive a travel subsidy to school and free transportation for field trips. Not surprisingly, pressure on enrollment for non-LINC classes is increased as potential new arrivals who are eligible usually choose the relative "perks" of LINC programs over school board sponsored ones. Office staff at CSSAT obliges, and asks the prospective student to return for an in-house, LINC assessment at the earliest opportunity. Of course, CSSAT has little choice; LINC pays rent money directly to the agency (school boards currently do not; Hannah Cabaj, personal communication) in addition to the computers provided.

Programs such as CSSAT continue to operate by seeking out every and all available sources of funding in addition to their own fundraising activities such as banquets and raffles. At CSSAT, classes funded from two different school boards coexist alongside LINC programs. If by chance, the stability of one class comes at the expense of another, staff at CSSAT will try to rectify the problem by directing students into a class that might not be the best for them. If this does not stem the loss of attendance, then the class closes and CSSAT looks to replace it with something else -- another class or other another settlement program. Teachers are usually the most seriously affected by these developments. For students, there are always other classes immediately available, even in the same agency. There are rarely other teaching jobs to be had on such short notice -- if at all.

Actually, most of the teachers working in community-based programs are employed by school boards. The Ontario study cited earlier revealed that 70% of adult teachers working in LINC classes

were school board employees, whereas only 10% were actually employed by community agencies (TESL Ontario, 1999). For teachers, the reality of co-sponsorship means that there are two organizations whose authority must be carefully counterbalanced. On the one hand, is the community agency, which has unique programs, client groups, and often-idiosyncratic ways of doing things. On the other, is the school board, the often impersonal bureaucracy whose adherence to strict rules of accountability and curriculum conformity reflect funding conditions set by government departments eager to implement LINC curricula and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs) (see Adamowski, 1999).

Whether or not the diverse language styles and defining social identities of particular community agencies can be accommodated within the task-based, communicative orientations of the CLBs remains to be seen, given its relative infancy and ongoing development as a national guide for ESL instruction. Certainly, the CLBs have much to offer teachers in terms of helping them conceptualize the types of language practices students will encounter in their day to day lives. Yet we should remember that, as always, there are significant differences of opinion regarding task-based teaching. In community agencies such as CSSAT a focus on "task" alone as the unit of instruction (Cf. "strong" form of task-based instruction, Skehan, 1996) is not a particularly credible teaching approach for students whose predominant experiences of language education have been through rote learning, grammar-translation, dictation, drills and teacher-centred pedagogies. Most students in my course would be sceptical of instruction that did not integrate a

substantial degree of explicit focus on form (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) prior to and after a task-based activity (Cf. "weak" form of task-based instruction, Skehan, 1996; see also chapters six and seven; Cummins, 1998b; Long & Crookes, 1992).

It is worth recalling here the cautionary words of Michael Swan, who as far back as 1985, warned against the general imposition of a singular notion of language teaching -- in his case, the communicative approach -- on the profession as a whole: "Designing a language course involves reconciling a large number of different and often conflicting priorities, and it is of little use to take one aspect of the language (structures, notions/functions, or anything else) and to use this systematically as a framework for the whole of one's teaching" (Swan, 1985, p. 81).

Some twenty years later, and the pursuit of a "one size fits all" approach to language education seems to have captured the entire imagination of major ESL policy-makers in Canada. In a note of caution reminiscent of Swan's critique, LINC supervisor Eleanor Adamowski, recently expressed her deep reservations regarding a singular, comprehensive assessment system as proposed for the CLBs.

It is not likely that we will ever devise a classroom test or set of tasks that will make evaluation and promotion easy. Adult ESL includes many factors that are difficult to measure. Because instructors do much more than teach language skills (the Guidelines stress social knowledge and coping skills), we may have to accept that we will never have a foolproof way to ensure consistency ... it may not be possible to quantify every aspect of learning. I believe the instructor's professional judgement is still the most important tool our program has (Adamowski, 1999, p. 4)

I agree entirely with Adamowski's observations. In retrospect, we now know that the original desire for "foolproof ways to ensure consistency" inadvertently marginalized many requiring assistance and precipitated the need for community-based programs in the first place. In place of formal educational institutions, community agencies such as CSSAT attract students through unique programs combining flexible language instruction and a wide range of settlement services for newcomers -- often provided by staff who speak the same language and share a similar sociocultural background (Cf. "ethnic" agencies, Burnaby, 1988).

To reiterate a key point made earlier, 56% of the providers of ESL programs in Ontario are community-based agencies (TESL Ontario, 1999, p. 1). Yet this "fact" has had little or no bearing on the production of theory related to L2 pedagogy. In this regard, we may need to conceptualize community programs as not just "unique", but in many ways "incommensurable", without common measure (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998; Pennycook, 1994a). In the lessons on the Quebec referendum and critical citizenship, the ideas produced and exchanged in class were in many ways incommensurable, reflecting an unanticipated convergence of past experiences and new expectations which linked our classroom to broader developments in Canadian society. While generalized curricula and benchmarks may be useful in some instances, I would concur with Adamowski that "the instructor's professional judgement is still the most important tool" for the circumstances of the lessons I describe, and community-based ESL in general.

4.3 CSSAT: CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY SETTINGS

As its name indicates, the Chinese Settlement Services Agency of Toronto (CSSAT) is geared towards serving the needs of Chinese immigrants and refugees. In the past, the vast majority of clients came from Hong Kong. Recently, however, more have arrived from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan with a few ethnic Chinese from Malaysia and Singapore as well. CSSAT is located within one of the city's long established Asian neighborhoods. Known by Torontonians simply as Chinatown, the area is a dense mix of residential and commercial property combining street vendors, restaurants, and a wide array of small businesses prominently advertised in Chinese, Vietnamese and English. Our agency occupies the entire third floor of an older office building, notably unacademic in appearance, and one that houses a Chinese book store, stereo shop, and a grocery in the basement.

The area apportioned for ESL instruction is somewhat constrained. In all, there are seven classrooms available to be shared by the thirty-three ESL classes that take place on a regular evening and daytime basis. Conveniently, all but two of these are part-time, anywhere from three to twelve hours per week, which eases the scheduling difficulties involved. The two full-time courses run five hours a day, twenty-five hours per week. There are approximately four hundred and fifty students and usually around ten to fifteen students in a classroom at any given time. Some classrooms are windowless and others have just enough space to pass between

compact rows of desks. For the nineteen teachers on staff, there is a small staff room equipped with a photocopier machine, several tape recorders, and a number of ESL reference books and class materials for their use.

Characteristic of these types of ESL programs, language instruction is only one of many important services that occur at the site. Many newcomers visit the agency to receive multilingual counseling (i.e. Cantonese, Mandarin, English) regarding Employment Insurance, Social Assistance, SIN cards, housing, OHIP, and employment possibilities. On the walls of the center, bilingual posters advertise upcoming seminars that reflect the types of concerns and interests shared by the center's clients: educational practices in Canada, community policing, bus tours of Ontario, starting a small business, seniors' and women's support group meetings. The center has a Wife Assault Project to educate the community and provide counseling. A Chinese heritage language program for children is also popular. And every year, the busiest time at the center is around the end of April, when tax forms for seniors are filled out by volunteers for a nominal fee. In fact, the popularity of services provided has been as much of an incentive as specific linguistic needs in maintaining mandatory attendance figures required for continued ESL funding from government sources.

Considerable program flexibility has evolved around the need of attracting and keeping sufficient numbers at the centre. For example, continuous intake and mixed streaming are mainstays of the ESL program. Some students have been in my class for several years and others for only a few weeks. From the first week of

September (when the course begins) to its completion at the end of July, students drop in and out of classes at will. Many of my students, for example, go on vacation for months at a time often returning without having practiced or spoken English for the duration.

Officially, an absence of two weeks requires permission from the teacher and possible loss of place in the program, but again, funding and attendance realities necessitate accommodating all comers and returnees with relatively few if any conditions.

Funding and attendance demands are also influential in the organization of the various classes into basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. For instance, I teach the only class designated as advanced in our program. Its designation and composition, however, are as much a consequence of scheduling and the relative distribution of students at the agency as they are a reflection of performance standards described in the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 1996) or ACTFL (1982) guidelines. Although there are three classes called intermediate, the students that graduate to my class tend to come from the one intermediate class scheduled at roughly the same time in the morning. Thus for the morning sessions, the placement of a new student in either the advanced or intermediate level is often determined by the relative numerical strength of these classes at the specific time of entry assessment. The ambiguity around class levels is further compounded by the fact that close friendships with other students and teachers, personal schedules, and familial responsibilities often take precedence in student placements. The cumulative effect in my own class has been a student body with

language abilities ranging from low-intermediate (especially in terms of speaking and listening) to advanced with occasional superior level students passing through on their way to university study or professional employment (see ACTFL guidelines, 1982).

In my own class, most students do not view the wide discrepancy in L2 abilities as a serious deterrent. Though the class only runs from 9:30 am to 12:30 PM every Tuesday to Friday morning, several regulars spend over two hours a day in transit even though other programs might be closer to where they live. Some attend almost every day of the year, which is remarkable when you consider the fact that Toronto is a city in which almost every conceivable major service or business transaction can be done in Cantonese. Such commitment of time and travel indicates that an alternative set of commonalities outweigh L2 differences in motivating students to attend our ESL program and others like it. Specifically, shared sociocultural experiences, a common first language, and a community agency that supports and promotes these values, draw students to my class and enhance the lasting friendships and program loyalties that have developed over time. In the lessons described in this chapter, fifteen students were in attendance, all of which claim Chinese ethnicity. With the exception of one student from Malaysia and one from Taiwan, all of the rest come from Hong Kong. Half are over the age of 50 and eleven are women. Most are retired and financially secure; outside of homemaking duties only two students have paid employment. As this profile indicates, many common points of reference characterize

the students in this class and their expectations around learning and using language.

One final point on the setting for these lessons: The support and benefits that students receive from the agency are not entirely one-sided. In a time of precarious funding, the wide variety of relevant services CSSAT provides increases its pool of potential language students with which it ensures compliance with ever-increasing attendance requirements dictated by budget-slashing governments. Indeed, with diminished public funding, a large and faithful client base provides a number of increasingly essential functions at the center. These days, students are frequently called upon to buy raffle-tickets, attend banquets, and buy small gifts, from which all proceeds are returned to the agency. As well, students of longstanding sometimes volunteer their services and skills for agency events. Some of my more advanced students have served as translators; others have devoted considerable time and energy providing entertainment for money-generating banquets. Almost weekly, one of the agency's staff members comes to our class to promote a seminar or fundraising event. The overall sense actively promoted is that students are not anonymous numbers in a formal institution but rather valued members of a community, one with which they share close bonds of sociocultural identity, and one in which language learning is relaxed and but a small part of what goes on amongst family and friends. This sense is extended to include shared responsibility for the continuity of the agency.

4.3.1 Citizenship Training at CCSAT: Reflecting a Political Community in Formation and Transition.

In terms of active citizenship, the appearance of mutual development between agency and ESL students has been marked by a number of notable inconsistencies, which shall be discussed in greater detail below. But in many ways, such difficulties reflect the current political challenges facing the Chinese-Canadian community as a whole. Although ethnic Chinese constitute the largest and fastest-growing immigrant population in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), they have been somewhat reluctant to participate actively in formal political processes (see Demarra, 1996; Vincent, 1997). To reiterate the theme from chapter two, many Chinese newcomers equate citizenship with the naturalization process; as well, respect and obedience to authority have been highly valued. A number of underlying reasons have been suggested. According to Metro Councilor Olivia Chow, the colonial experience of people born in Hong Kong is that "they had no say in government whatsoever" (Demarra, 1996, p. B6). Adding to this, Chow also identifies the continued legacy of deep-rooted Confucianist values behind a common belief that one should "not offend or challenge authority" (Demarra, 1996, p. B6; see King, 1991).

Other historical factors have been noted. As a result of the 20th century tensions between communist mainland China and nationalist Taiwan, most Chinese immigrants see politics as something "unhealthy" if not "Machiavellian", according to Tony Wong, a member of the York Region Police Services Board. "That is why we

have to educate them and tell them politics in North America and Canada is very different (Demarra, 1996, p. B6)." This theme of civic education is also taken up by Vivian Chong, editor of Toronto's *Ming Pao* newspaper, in regards to the last federal election in 1997. "The culture of the Chinese from Hong Kong is to be rather apathetic about elections... But we are trying to raise awareness and enthusiasm of Chinese people... It's the main reason we have given the election a lot of coverage" (Lakey, 1997, p. A10).

Lawyer Richard Lim, a major contributor to the provincial Progressive Conservatives, blames mainstream political parties for inhibiting the Chinese community from playing a more meaningful role in political life (Demara, 1996, p. B6). Major political parties tend to encourage ethnic factions within as a kind of window-dressing to attract support from immigrant constituencies. What Lim calls "ghettoized ethnic participation" is a strong indictment of how the dominant discourse of multiculturalism can potentially serve to disempower Canadian minorities. In compliance with liberal notions of diversity and equality, ethnic factions are promoted and maintained in mainstream political parties. Yet, by not merging these factions into the decision-making echelons of formal parties, members of these groups remain marginal to political power. In another cynical example of ghettoization, Lim criticizes the "unwritten policy" of governments and party officials to select a "token" leader who becomes the sole representative or spokesperson for an ethnic community when it is convenient to have one "on side". As Lim points out, "once they have picked the token, they don't speak to anyone else" (Demara, 1996, p. B6).

In reflecting on these accounts from established political leaders in the Toronto Chinese community, one notes a sense of paradox and ambivalence around what can be gained and what must be lost in negotiating a new political culture. On the one hand, experienced insiders and politicians such as Chow, Wong and Lim speak somewhat tantalizingly of unrealized potential based on numerical strengths and future electoral opportunities. On the other, these opportunities can only be realized through generating a new collective Chinese-Canadian identity, one in which previous historical and ideological differences amongst former Hong Kong, Taiwan, and PRC citizens may not be easily subsumed. Part of this unpredictable equation, as well, would include the complex ways in which classed and gendered values within these various polities have been differentiated and how they articulate with the dominant values of Canadian society. Add to this what Tu Wei-ming (1991) calls the "fragmented" history of the Chinese diaspora, where there was "little communication among groups within a host country, let alone any transnational cooperation" (p.17), and one recognizes that the potential for political solidarity founded on notions of homogeneous values is more virtual than actual and will need to be (re)discovered in the Canadian context.

A similar ambivalence can be seen around the issue of ethnic leadership. On the one hand, most recognize that the selection and mainstream approval of "token" community leaders discourages grassroots development of participatory citizenship skills. Moreover, and reminiscent of British colonial practices (see Kuper, 1973), such activities are sustained through the reinforcement of parochial and

sometimes repressive forms of traditional authority, not least of all the conformity demanded of community membership. On the other hand, the prominent mainstream profile of leaders such as Olivia Chow or Dr. Joseph Wong can increase their grassroots legitimacy *within* their community and thus enable them to quickly and forcefully mobilize large scale, collective action. Such was the case in the anti-W5 movement, which protested the CTV program's claim that Hong Kong students were taking university places away from Canadian students (see Burney, 1995, p. 9; Demara, 1996).⁵

Not surprisingly, many of the political ambivalences and transitional strains expressed above are being worked through at agencies such as CSSAT in terms of policy and programming. As expressed in its various promotional documents, the agency recognizes and echoes the concerns of many Chinese-Canadian leaders regarding the importance of developing and encouraging more active citizenship skills amongst its clients. As well, like many community agencies in the city, CSSAT has taken an active part in public advocacy or lobbying activities, particularly around issues pertinent to its clients. And in these activities it has often claimed its public authority based on both numbers (i.e. its large client base) as well as ethnic representation. In this sense, the agency has rather effectively appropriated the discourses of multiculturalism and liberal democracy in Canada. On the other hand, the processes by

⁵ W5 is a popular and long-running current affairs program on the CTV television network. In 1979, it broadcast a program called "Campus Giveaway", which alleged that Canadians were being turned away from Canadian universities because of the high number of Hong Kong students enrolled. "Chinese Canadians organized nationally to protest the racist depictions" in the story (Burney, 1995, p. 9).

which clients and students are consulted have often been too brief or superficial to justify the claims of representation made on their behalf.

One recent and notable example, mentioned earlier, was the circulation of a petition in support of the Immigrant Women's Health Center in Toronto, which was being threatened with closure by the provincial government. The petition was given out in the morning and expected back by noon. Without time to discuss the background issues involved or organize language lessons around them, informed consent was all but impossible. At the same time, by having the ESL teachers circulate the petition, the agency was certain to have compliance based on the traditional respect held for teachers in the community. A couple of teachers refused to participate in spite of their support for the health center. This example of what I would call coercive volition was not premeditated, I believe. In fact, based on discussions and interviews I subsequently had with two agency staff members, this incident seemed to be more of a micro-perspective on the types of transitional and ambivalent problems indicated above. On the one hand, there is the desire to act decisively and pragmatically in the Canadian political context. On the other, there has been little examination of the point where political pragmatism might become unethical in the same Canadian context and actually counterproductive in terms of the larger mission of encouraging active and critical citizenship. Questions such as, "On what bases do organizations such as CSSAT make legitimate claims of representation" haven't been sufficiently explored, partly because neither clients nor staff have felt compelled to confront them.

Certainly, raising these types of issues on an ongoing basis with teachers and staff has been one important outcome from this incident and one in keeping with the types of validity criteria (see Ch. 3) for research and pedagogy that I advocate for in community programs. But it has been a slow and difficult process at times. Several key reasons can be identified. One is that administrators and teachers rarely mingle and discuss their respective activities at the agency. Accordingly, opportunities for integrating agency initiatives with syllabus design are often missed. Another related reason, particularly within administration, would be the perception that ESL language instruction and citizenship education are largely separate areas of study. This would be consistent with the concerns raised by Derwing (1992) and Bullard (1989) above. Indeed, getting through the naturalization test has been the prevailing approach to citizenship instruction at CSSAT. A telling anecdote was provided by one of the on-site lead instructors during an informal interview. Commenting on the teaching methods of a colleague who teaches ESL citizenship at the center, Angie (a pseudonym) noted that one of the students asked about the meanings of the "wrong answers" (i.e. distracters) from the multiple choice test exams used in class. According to Angie, the teacher's response was, "Why bother. You only need to get the right answers."

CHAPTER 5
TEACHING THE QUEBEC REFERENDUM
IN A COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PROGRAM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I demonstrate the substantive aspects of a *counterdiscourse* (Simon, 1992) to what I have characterized as passive Canadian ESL citizenship practices in chapter two. This critique will be realized by way of a discussion of a unit of ESL lessons that examined the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty. These lessons also serve to illustrate several aspects of the conceptual framework outlined in chapter one. The classroom activities I discuss explore issues of language and power and the negotiation of individual and collective identities. Other related topics include community and cultural learning strategies as the site of critical reflexive practice, the use of L1 to develop Critical Language Awareness, and L2 vocabulary acquisition both from a conventional ESL approach as well as one informed by a poststructural understanding of language. In the spirit of my earlier discussion on Foucault, I will also scrutinize how -- through the disciplinary matrix of ESL -- we come to know a language and how this *linguistic* knowledge of procedures, competencies, methods and theories, might position us as political subjects.

5.2 THE REFERENDUM DEBATE: A NEW POLITICAL CULTURE

Perhaps the most unexpected challenge for an immigrant community would be the realization that the new country of choice is facing imminent dissolution. The Quebec referendum on the possible separation of Quebec from Canada was and continues to be a source of concern for my students and most Canadians. The narrow victory of the federalist side on October 30, 1995, (50.6% to 49.4%) has done little to generate confidence in the future. With popular Quebec nationalist, Lucien Bouchard, as premier, the ruling Parti Quebecois recently won the 1998 provincial election, and continues to hint at possibly holding another divisive referendum on sovereignty during its current term. The "Never-endum", a somewhat morbid euphemism for English-French relations, promises to occupy all of Canada's political energies for many years to come.

For the students in my class at CSSAT, most of whom come from Hong Kong, there had been a considerable amount of apprehension and, for some, feelings of being betrayed by those who have promoted a singular image of Canadian stability and prosperity to prospective investors/immigrants. At the heart of such convictions, is a sense of jumping from the frying pan (i.e. China's reacquisition of Hong Kong in 1997) into the proverbial fire. But what also underlies these sentiments is the difficult negotiation of a new political culture -- its privileges, obligations, and potential transgressions -- through the personal and collective memories of another (Simon, 1994). As was often expressed in the classroom, the notion of a responsible national government even allowing the

referendum to take place on the possible break-up of the federal system seemed almost beyond belief, an acute violation of common-sensical norms. Not unlike some English Canadians, many of my students expressed surprise that the leaders of Quebec's sovereignty movement had not been arrested for sedition.

Prior to the Oct. 30th referendum vote, there had been anxious questions in my class about the ramifications for the future: What would happen to investments, property and Montreal relatives in a newly independent Quebec? Would Canadians ever go to war over this issue? The confusion and ambiguity that my students sensed actually paralleled the unfolding referendum process in many significant ways. For example, some polls said as many as thirty per cent of Quebec voters believed that a yes vote for *sovereignty* meant a renegotiation of the existing federalist structure with Quebecers maintaining Canadian passports, pensions and the Canadian dollar as currency. Indeed, sovereignists promised to negotiate a new form of "economic and political partnership" after a yes victory. In contrast, federalist politicians were at great pains to emphasize that it was actually a vote for *independence*, an irrevocable break with unforeseeable and volatile consequences. Disputes over the specific wording and meaning of the referendum question, particularly the implications of the choice and meaning of vocabulary (e. g. *sovereignty* instead of *independence*), were a constant feature of the campaign in its early stages, and this became the focus of our lessons over several days.

For reasons that will be expanded upon in the following section, the initial lesson on the Quebec referendum was one focused

primarily on L2 vocabulary acquisition and use. The treatment of material below was an opportunity to reflect on conventional approaches informed by structural linguistics, psycholinguistics, and cognitive-based, empirical research in order to assess their appropriateness for the topic at hand. After describing the lessons, I will revisit the issue of discursive power and indicate how conventional approaches in L2 vocabulary acquisition, used exclusively, contribute to passive citizenship. Ultimately, and based on my classroom experience, I will advocate for a poststructural and dialogic approach to vocabulary pedagogy in order to develop the kinds of critical literacy skills that the referendum, in the immediate context, warranted, and active and critical ESL citizenship, in the long term, require.

5.2.1 Learning Strategies and L2 Vocabulary Acquisition through a Community-Based ESL Pedagogy

As mentioned in chapter one, an important curricular strategy for a community-based, critical ESL pedagogy would be to accommodate the diverse experiences of language learning that minority students bring to the classroom. This strategy recognizes that the degree to which language socialization in the home matches that of the school has often been a strong indicator of mainstream academic success. In education, conventional materials, methods, and forms of evaluation have usually privileged the value orientations and textual practices of dominant social groups. Moreover, knowledge constructs of dominant elites are often designated as

innate characteristics that are universally valid and desirable. Those students whose community literacy practices and ways of transmitting knowledge about language vary in any way are often marked as deficient and in need of remediation in order to catch up with what is presumed to be "normal" student performance (see Cummins, 1996).

Although affirming the diverse experiences of minority students is important, many critical pedagogues point out that beliefs central to one's identity can be problematic if not oppressive to others. What is perceived as personal and private can actually reflect internalized *social* norms worthy of critical scrutiny (see Simon, 1992, pp. 61-62). Thus personal experiences, including those pertaining to L1 use and transmission, are important sites to initiate new forms of critical awareness that have important social and political implications beyond the classroom. In the context of this chapter, this would pertain specifically to the conjunction of critical language awareness around L2 vocabulary acquisition and how this awareness might facilitate active and critical citizenship skills. The teaching approach I followed in this regard can be better illustrated through a discussion of the learning strategies most favoured by the students in this particular class at CSSAT.

In my class, the difficulty of a new reading is often measured by the number of students who state, "There are too many new words." This expressed comment is indicative of what ESL researchers such as Parry (1996), Bell (1995), and Liu (1997) describe as a "bottom-up" reading strategy preferred by most Chinese-speaking students when determining meanings from L2

texts. For many of these students, the underlying rationale is that "vocabulary learning is at the heart of mastering a foreign language" (Rubin & Thompson, cited in Tang, 1997, p. 45). This learning process is one in which the denotative meaning of individual lexical items are first deduced, after which existing knowledge of L2 syntax is employed to work out how they might fit together. Following this, descriptive and generalized meanings are formulated. And finally, as Parry experienced with her Chinese students (1996, p. 680), "only as they advanced towards a translation of the text did they feel able to relate it in any meaningful way to their experience" (see also Haynes, 1993; Little & Singleton, 1991, pp. 127-130).

In this bottom-up or lexically-driven approach, students are usually reluctant to make guesses or to tolerate ambiguity of vocabulary and phrasal items during initial encounters with L2 texts. With my own students at CCSAT, activities from L2 reading books that encourage inferencing from contextual cues or inductive vocabulary acquisition are less appreciated than readers that include comprehensive word lists and intrinsic descriptions of an etymological, grammatical and phonological nature (see Cummins, 1998a, 1998b; Keen, 1985; Rogerson et al., 1988, Weber & Weber, 1991). Successful inferencing, of course, is not simply an affective matter. Vocabulary size is a strong indicator of potential ability in this area (see Nation, 1993; Qian, 1998, 1996). Laufer suggests that a vocabulary of 3,000 word families (including closely-related derivations) should cover about 90% to 95% of the words in a text and would be necessary to enable inferencing (cited in Qian, 1998, p. 14). Nation (1993, p. 124) points out several other crucial factors

involved: background knowledge of the subject matter, especially in terms of low-frequency words and specialized, technical subject areas (see also Corson, 1995); knowledge of linguistic cues such as parts of speech and word association in the immediate context can also provide support.

Following requests from my class, and based on my own "bottom-up" teaching experiences in Chongqing, Peoples Republic of China, I often have students read short passages from texts, which I repeat orally for pronunciation purposes followed by close analysis of isolated vocabulary and grammar forms. Later a review of vocabulary is included along with comprehension questions that evaluate *descriptive, personal-interpretive, critical* and *creative* literacy phases related to the reading (see Ada, 1988; Cummins, 1989, 1996; Morgan, 1993, 1998).

Directly related to bottom-up literacy practices is a greater reliance, if not dependency for some, on dictionary use (see Oxford & Crookall, 1990; Tang, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997). In my class, during a group reading, many students silently search their bilingual dictionaries for an L1 translation of a word regardless of the contextual relevance and quality of gloss I might have just provided in English. In their notebooks, many compile bilingual word lists related to the readings, which some use later for rote practice at home (see Qian, 1996). Although I have often suggested that this approach might have limited benefit, many follow this strategy exclusively.

My reservations regarding excessive dictionary use are similar to those raised by Oxford and Crookall (1990, p. 13), and Zimmerman

(1997, p. 134), who suggest that dictionaries provide mostly definitional knowledge and are inadequate for both contextual and intertextual comprehension. McCarthy and O'Dell (1997, p. 10), however, note that a good dictionary can provide not only word meanings but also valuable information on synonyms, collocations, segmental and supersegmental pronunciation features, varieties of English (i.e. American, Australian, and British), word class, grammatical usage, and labels that indicate situational conventions. In keeping with more recent ESL/EFL trends, McCarthy and O'Dell's (1997) reference and exercise book on L2 vocabulary devotes an entire unit on suggested learning strategies for using unilingual and bilingual dictionaries.

My own thinking and teaching around dictionary use has evolved along with many of the developmental trends in the ESL literature. Over the past couple of years, I have moved from expressed disapproval to qualified experimentation in class, examining the situations in which singular (monosemic), denotative or archetypal meanings provide a type of scaffolding or intermediate stage by which contextual and intertextual comprehension is more likely to occur (see Summers, 1988, p. 115). From a more critical perspective, I often comment on or point out the difficulties, ambiguities, sociocultural factors and power relations that pertain to translation and lexicography (see Carter, 1987, Ch. 6; Corson, 1997, p. 176; Crystal, 1987, Ch. 18).⁶

⁶ In terms of social power relations, I sometimes take up dictionary meanings from a micro-perspective similar to the earlier discussion of normative discourses, and national narratives (Bhabha 1990). Whose meanings get printed in the dictionary? Whose get left out? Who decides where a meaning

During group readings, when I see a student trying to search inconspicuously through a dictionary, I often inquire as to which word. I then ask other students, who are often searching for the same word but don't want to attract attention to the fact, if their meaning is the same. With occasional coaxing from me, this becomes a spontaneous, whole class activity: students comparing and evaluating subtle qualities and differences in L1 and then trying to explain them to me in L2 so that I might offer my opinion on which gloss best reflects the context and topic at hand. This oral cross-referencing and negotiation in L1 helps illuminate multidimensional qualities of vocabulary that would otherwise not be gleaned through isolated dictionary use. Thus in a direct and experiential way, evidence of the inadequacies of exclusive dictionary use are demonstrated. Furthermore, such activities initiate awareness of language as socially constituted, in Saussure's sense, based on arbitrary, differentiated signs within a self-regulating system. Potentially, this awareness of the *structural* determination of meanings serves as an important pretext for developing a *poststructural* understanding of language, one in which differentiated

begins and ends and how we should act upon what a particular meaning suggests. One particularly timely and pertinent example is the word *competitive*. In terms of Canadian manufacturing and industrial production, the authoritative meaning proffered from our business community is that we are deficient in terms of following global rules for *competition*. But this is only a partial truth. The conventional boundaries placed on the referents for this signifier -- and which exclusively reflect powerful business interests -- intentionally ignore how workers in other countries must follow entirely different "competitive" rules regarding the freedom to organize trade unions, change jobs, and work in relative safety. In short, they are allowed to compete as producers but rarely as consumers and almost never as participants in the economic and political decisions that determine their lives (see Morgan 1993, 1998).

meanings in a signifying chain do not exist by mere convention or chance but often as a consequence of social competition and conflict related to material rewards.

The oral negotiation of meanings has other important acquisitional benefits to consider in light of the bottom-up strategies preferred by most of my students. As outlined by several researchers (see Carter, 1987; Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Corson, 1995; Cummins, 1998b; Ellis, 1994; Oxford & Crookall, 1990; Wesche & Paribakht, 1996), vocabulary acquisition is not simply a linear process of accumulating more and more discrete items. Rather, it is multidimensional and realized by degree and recursion, through repeated exposure in productive and receptive contexts and ongoing interlanguage (re)formulation based on other words newly added to the student's mental lexicon. In order to gain *depth* of word knowledge, a learner should know a word's graphological/phonological representation, denotative reference, connotative meanings, grammatical uses, collocational patterns, and typical word associations (Bialystok & Sharwood Smith, cited in Ellis 1994, pp. 6-7). Significantly, Ellis argues that such depth cannot be gained solely through deliberate focus on words, or *intentional* learning, indicative of bottom-up strategies. Rather vocabulary depth can only be achieved through a combination of both intentional and *incidental* learning, in which acquisition is enhanced through a primary focus on message content with a secondary or peripheral focus directed at form (Ellis, 1994, pp. 2-3). Oral texts, in this perspective, increase and enrich the language that facilitates incidental vocabulary learning. As well, oral negotiation "affords

opportunities for learners to indicate their non-comprehension and, through negotiation of meaning, to receive input that is more finely tuned to their abilities to comprehend" (Long, cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 3). As I have observed in the dictionary-related activities above, oral interaction tends to fuse both top-down and bottom-up approaches during meaning negotiation as students invariably refer to alternative contexts and experiential meanings in these discussions.

In short, the research on intentional and incidental learning strongly suggests that by not focussing exclusively on forms, words, or component parts, but rather on larger contextual, interpretive and experiential meanings, one can successfully compensate for the limitations that focus on form entails, particularly in terms of developing depth of vocabulary knowledge. Yet experimentation with both oral meaning negotiation and top-down approaches is rarely and reluctantly initiated by students in my own class, an experience echoed in Parry's (1996) case study. Even though most of my students acknowledge and recognize the benefits that alternative strategies may provide, attention to form and individual words -- including a preference for dictionary use -- generally precedes any critical and interpretive engagement.

The primary reason for my students' preferred approach, as many researchers have suggested (Bell, 1995; Liu, 1997; Matalene, 1985; Parry, 1996), might be attributed to the prodigious burden of becoming literate in Chinese and the influence of L1 teaching and learning strategies, which the complex, ideographic writing system imposes on language socialization. Such strategies are nicely detailed in Bell's (1995) description of her own experiences of learning how to

write in Chinese. Bell (1995) recounts her frustration at the slow progress she perceived ("perhaps four new characters in a week, sometimes less;" p. 693) as a result of the methodical attention to the correct stroke order for individual characters as directed by her teacher, Cindy Lam (see also Parry, 1996, p. 686). Experiences such as Bell's illustrate that in Chinese literacy, learning the parts before the whole, attention to formalism, repetitive copying, and rote memorization of foundational meanings as found in dictionaries are all highly valued learning strategies. One other key related factor, as noted by Liu (1997) and reflected in Bell's experience (1995), is the degree of authority that teachers assume in directing each step in this progression from part to whole in L1 literacy. According to Liu (1997),

When Chinese speakers don't know the pronunciation or the meaning of a word in print or writing in their elementary school years, they ask their parents or teachers, whereas when young US English speakers encounter a new word, they try to pronounce it and then try to figure out meaning from context. Thus, in the students' elementary reading activities, Chinese students learn to trust and depend on authorities while the English-speaking students learn to explore and discover on their own...The complexity of Chinese characters and words requires an educational method...that emphasizes repetitive drills on reading, writing and memorization. Spending much time learning such a complicated writing system, children learn self-discipline and respect for authority. (1997, p.13)

Qualities such as respect for authority, self-discipline, a preference for memorization, or attention to form before meaning, would all seem consistent and predictable for students whose L1 is Chinese. Nevertheless, in addressing the issue of learning strategies, it is

important to see this process as mediated and negotiated by *individual* experiences rather than unilaterally determined -- a cultural straitjacket transmitted from generation to generation. In my class, on any given day, there are some students who are more willing than others to experiment around a particular set of issues and the language skills necessary for their exploration.

As I have argued elsewhere (Morgan, 1997a), the reasons for such "inconsistencies" are potentially inaccessible and irreducible to preordinate research models and essentialized categories of social identity. I am in complete agreement with Parry (1996), who notes the benefits of knowing "central tendencies within cultural groups" but also warns of the dangers "if it leads teachers to characterize groups and individuals in terms of easy dichotomies" (p. 667). In terms of those students who choose to venture outside ascribed categories and theorems, "it is positively offensive" to such students "to suggest that they are not properly representative of their own cultural groups because their personal ways of operating do not correspond to a model that is based on statistical generalities" (Parry, 1996, p. 667).

The challenge for teachers is to accept students as individuals with complex and sometimes contradictory investments and desires, not as functions of mechanistic and stereotypical models, many of which proliferate in ESL (see Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Nayar, 1997; Peirce, 1995; Spack, 1997). To reiterate the central theme of this section, this means making students' value orientations and experiences of language socialization part of the "official" curriculum while simultaneously allowing for opportunities in which critical

reflexivity and opportunities for exploration are encouraged. In the spirit of Parry's critique above, it also means resisting any presupposed intimacy or deep "understanding" of one's students based on prior readings and expressed through a patronizing syllabus that equates social identity with "celebratory" or "benevolent" multiculturalism (Cummins & Danesi, 1990; May, 1994).

To sum up this section, I will point out specifically how my students' learning strategies and value orientations were both affirmed and challenged through the organization of the lesson. Below, in regards to a discussion on the Quebec referendum question, the preference for a bottom-up reading strategy was foregrounded. Instead of first reading an article and evaluating it on more holistic or experiential terms, we began by examining key vocabulary items in isolation. In terms of vocabulary acquisition this might be characterized as a progression from decontextualized, to semi-contextualized, and finally contextualized exposure to encourage depth of lexical knowledge.

As well, recognizing that many of my students prefer to consult their bilingual dictionaries, I made direct or *intentional* vocabulary learning (Ellis, 1994) a key feature and group activity of the initial lesson. Students were encouraged to use their dictionaries, but orally and comparatively, in this way simulating to a great degree the discursive contexts in which the referendum question was being appraised by politicians and political pundits in the mainstream media. At the same time, the discrepancies that occurred when comparing dictionary glosses, served to illustrate their definitional limitations and arbitrariness, in the semiotic sense indicative of

Saussure's pioneering work. During the activity this social constructivist approach to word meanings was then expanded to highlight indeterminacy, a poststructural notion, as a key feature of signifying practices, and one connected to issues of power/knowledge. And finally, drawing on Liu's (1997) comments above, the status of teacher as final arbitrator or guarantor of referential meanings was placed in suspension. This was not simply a disingenuous game on my part but reflected the content at hand and my own provisional understanding of it as a life-long citizen whose political subjectivity -- and (mis)perception of autonomy -- has been conditioned through the dominant discourses of Canadian society.

5.2.2 First Lesson: Exploring the Vocabulary of the Referendum

As mentioned earlier, the Quebec referendum was on everybody's mind in my class at CCSAT. Many of my students were following daily developments through the Chinese media and subsequently asking me about some of the historical issues involved. From their questions it was also clear that the meanings pertaining to the Quebec referendum were being (re)appraised and framed by political dynamics unfolding in Hong Kong leading up to China's reacquisition in 1997.

The day after the Quebec legislature tabled the wording of the referendum question, I brought an article to class that included the question and outlined the specific reasons why the wording was a source of controversy. As often happens, many students had watched

or read about the issues the night before in the local Chinese media. Upon entering the class, one student asked me what the word *sovereignty* meant and whether it was the same as *independence*. His pronunciation wasn't too accurate, so I wrote the two words on the board and emphasized the correct phonological shape and syllable stress for each. The reason is that most of my students first encounter new L2 vocabulary in written form. My own teaching experiences, corroborated by Ellis (1993) and Channel (1988), suggest that the ability to form an adequate phonological representation of a new word serves as an important aid in retention and later use.

Next, I wrote on the board their respective adjective forms (i.e. sovereign, independent) recognizing that their presence/absence in the actual referendum question was a focal point of dispute. These two lexical items were of interest to everyone, and a couple of students gave impromptu translations to the whole group. Since I don't speak Cantonese, the predominant L1 in class, and only know a few phrases in Mandarin, I couldn't judge the quality of glosses being provided. At the same time, it was clear that there was considerable debate and some dissension over what was being offered. One student then came up to the front of the room and wrote the following translation in Chinese characters on the blackboard:

sovereignty: (in pinyin) *zhu quan* (third tone, second tone, in Mandarin; literal meaning of each constituent of the disyllabic compound: 'governing' and 'power', respectively).

independence: *du li* (second tone, fourth tone; literal meaning of each constituent of the disyllabic compound: 'alone' and 'stand', respectively) (see Oxford University Press, Concise English-Chinese/Chinese-English Dictionary, 1986; Donald Qi, email correspondence).

The debate only got more animated. At this moment, it was clear to me that my students had chosen the decoding of key vocabulary items as the pathway through which the referendum might be made comprehensible and their position and responsibilities as new Canadians -- or new Chinese-Canadians -- would be negotiated. Instead of immediately handing out the article, I decided to make the students' early efforts to find consensus around their translations as the explicit focus for the class -- essentially a bottom-up strategy around the range of meanings/responses that would be pertinent to the Quebec referendum. I put students into small groups and asked them to discuss the similarities and differences between these two terms. Also, I asked them to think of other words that might be similar or related in some way. I encouraged the students to use their L1 and dictionaries whenever necessary. I then went around from group to group asking the students to explain the specific meanings and related issues/consequences that they discussed. After about twenty minutes, I ended the small group activity and had the class collectively review their ideas. Even after group work and dictionary use, consensus around the "definitive" meanings for sovereignty and independence was elusive, a point I was not disappointed to hear

given my own preference for an anti-foundationalist, poststructural conception of language.

These class discussions generated many important observations and experiences that opened up new ways of identifying the subtle complexities and implications for the referendum debate. Although most felt the terms largely similar in intent, one student concluded that sovereignty suggested "internal relations" that you "control by yourself" in contrast to independence, which involved "external relations with other separate countries." Another student stated that sovereignty implied "you belong to another country, but you have control over your own nation." In an important exchange one student equated sovereignty to human rights in China: "Don't interfere!" Another student disagreed and stated that "this should be under independence." This apparent contradiction then became our focus. Several students identified the base form and noun, sovereign, as the potential source for contrasting interpretations in that it potentially infers a higher "external" authority, whether individual, state or monarch. One student said her understanding of sovereignty was based on a comparison with the word autonomy, which I wrote on the board and had her repeat in Cantonese. The analogy she used was China's officially stated policy towards regions such as Hong Kong and Taiwan: "You can control yourself, arrange your own policy, but sovereignty belongs to China. China will not let any autonomous region have its own army."

5.2.3 L1 Word Formation and the Quebec Referendum

I was a bit surprised and intrigued by the contradictory statements that seemed to be a consequence of the group activity around vocabulary analysis. While these contradictions did seem to parallel the kinds of interpretive ambiguities taking place in Canada, their source, in my students' case, was intrinsic to their own understanding of the Chinese words used to express these concepts. Later, I found out that several of the bilingual dictionaries used for the activity had another translation besides *zhu quan* for 'sovereignty'. This alternative translation, *tong zhi quan* (third tone, fourth tone, second tone), seemed to be the source of much debate. The three characters translate literally as 'complete', 'govern', 'right'.

An interesting aspect of word formation here, as explained to me by my students and colleagues at CSSAT, is that the compound word formed by the last two characters, *zhi quan*, strongly connotes the right to govern oneself, independent of any higher or external authority. However with the application of one more character preceding it, the effect is almost the opposite: the addition of *tong* signifies, at the word level, the relinquishing of certain powers to a higher authority. Most of the students told me that *tong zhi quan* is not commonly used to express the notion of sovereignty anymore, especially in mainland China and Hong Kong. Many said the word is often associated with outdated, "feudalistic" principles, to which one of my students provided a most memorable translation: "Not so human rights."

One of my students from Taiwan contributed a couple of interesting observations that connected issues of word formation along with important historical and political factors. She said that in Taiwan, the word *tong zhi quan* was not so old and was quite commonly used to explain the authority vested in (the "sovereign") Chang Kai Shek as the undisputed leader on the island. Since his death and the relative loosening of the ruling Guomingdan's authority, many Taiwanese have a popular political expression, *tong zhi zhi ji* (literally, 'complete', 'govern', 'from', 'self'), which overlaps semantically with *zhi quan* and homophonically refers to a word to which it forms an antonymic relationship (*tong zhi quan*). According to my Taiwanese student, *tong zhi zhi ji* means, "People have their own power; they don't have to listen to the government."

The important point from these discussions, and one analogous to the referendum debate in Quebec, is that words that share common lexical roots, affixes, and pronunciation forms may actually have meanings that are unrelated or even opposite to each other. Close analysis and comparison of L1 words such as *zhu quan* and *tong zhi quan* helped the class recognize the potential ambiguities around L2 words such as *independence* and *sovereignty*, or *sovereign* (the noun/person) and *sovereignty* (the abstract noun/concept). But word formation and dictionary meanings alone could not account for these discrepancies. As the example from my Taiwanese student indicated, users of a common language are often positioned differently, based on history and identity, as to the meanings they associate with a particular sign/word. In chapter

seven, much more will be said about the relationship between word forms, word composition, and their potential discursive functions.

5.2.4 Practice Informs Theory: Conceptualizing L2 Vocabulary from a Poststructural Perspective.

At the completion of the vocabulary activity above, several students asked me which meaning for sovereignty was the correct one. I told them I wasn't sure, but that their discussion had changed the way I thought about these words and their potential influence on the referendum vote. Some students were quite surprised by my answer and no doubt suspected that I was either intentionally misleading them in some way or was negligent in my duties. In terms of passing ultimate judgement, this was true. But in fact, and in retrospect, my students' discussion really had honed in my professional and academic senses towards the sign /sovereign/ and how its potential ambiguities, etymology, and polysemic qualities could advance certain political aims. Part of my heightened "semiotic" awareness was a result of the many challenging course readings in poststructuralism, critical discourse analysis, cultural studies, and feminist pedagogy that were formative in my intellectual thinking at the time and continue to be so. Several complex and abstract theoretical concepts seemed to become real for me and in fact invigorated through classroom dialogue. For instance, the debate around "sovereignty" gave me a greater appreciation of Ricoeur's notion of "split-referentiality" (Janks, 1989), in which a single signifier can be used to refer explicitly to one referent -- more

publicly palatable -- while indirectly insinuating another more transgressive and partisan connotation (Cf. "presuppositional structures" in Kress, 1990, p. 91).

Another theorist who came to mind was the French poststructuralist, Jacques Derrida. While at times, Derrida's ideas and rhetorical style have seemed torturously obscure and elliptical to me, the classroom discussion over the relative differences and similarities between sovereignty and independence renewed my interest in Derrida's notion of *différance* (see Belsey, 1980; Cherryholmes, 1988; Donoghue, 1981; Norris, 1982; Terdiman, 1985; Weedon, 1987), particularly from a pedagogical perspective. The concept of *différance* (Derrida, 1982), with the graphic substitution of an *a* in its form, simultaneously invokes and undermines the systematicity of relationships (i.e. differences, presences, absences) from which meanings are constituted in Saussurian structuralism. *Différance*, in Derrida's conception, intentionally conflates two contrasting meanings derived from the French verb *différer*, which can be roughly translated into English as *differ* and *defer* (Derrida, 1982, pp. 8-9) The co-occurrence and interplay between these two signs -- an impossibility in structural linguistics -- serves to demonstrate that the assumed origins and anchoring of referential meaning is an illusion (this being somewhat analogous to Derrida's larger project of undermining the metaphysical and teleological foundations of Western philosophy)⁷.

⁷ That the anomalous spelling of *différance* is an effect of writing, rather than speech, is not incidental to Derrida's larger project. From its Greek origins, Western metaphysics has privileged the modality of speech as somehow more proximate to notions of ultimate truth, presence of being, or originary voice. Writing, in contrast, represents loss or debasement of the

It seemed to me that Derrida's twin notion of *différance*, the dispersal and deferral of meanings throughout a language and over time, would be a useful way to go about conceptualizing L2 vocabulary in the context of the referendum. Instead of seeking stable, denotative meanings in class, we might try to identify how the signs /sovereignty/ and /independence/ differed provisionally in relation to each other and other signs in language. For example, we could analyze how certain politicians avoided providing concrete policy details when asked to substantiate the terms that voters were being asked to pass judgement on. Instead, a politician might simply provide other words or phrases -- equally abstract and ambiguous -- as substitutes. When asked to define these new terms, he or she might provide others, and so on. Hence, the dispersal of meaning throughout language. Similarly, we could analyze this process over time, observing how the ultimate meanings and final ramifications of sovereignty were never clearly outlined because they were constantly being revised (Cf. Derrida's "transcendental signifier"), based on whether a federalist or separatist leader was being consulted and on the results of their most recent polls (their deferral) (see Cherryholmes, 1988).

To reiterate, these types of poststructural considerations helped shape my tacit understanding of unfolding events in the referendum and how I subsequently responded to them through critical language practices initiated in the classroom.

ideal or pure thought. Derrida overturns this hierarchy. Insofar as we can truly know ourselves, existentially, or find methods that verify the essence of our understanding, all knowledge, in Derrida's view, is analogous to "writing", a form of displacement and self-alienation (Donoghue, 1981; Norris, 1982).

5.2.5 Second Lesson: Newspaper Article and Classroom Treatment

Soon after the vocabulary discussion above, I circulated a copy of the referendum question (Toronto Star, Sept. 8, p. 1) to the students. The question: "Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Quebec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?" Not surprisingly, many students had trouble with the question. From a grammatical point of view, the complex clausal and phrasal structure seemed to amplify the deferment, in Derrida's sense, that many suggested was the pragmatic intent of the text. Similar to most Canadians, the students were uncertain as to what Quebecers were specifically being asked to vote on. I told them that the article I brought from the newspaper (Stewart, 1995) might help clarify some of the issues. I then distributed a copy to each student.

We first took up the newspaper article as a whole class activity. I would have a student read a short passage orally to the class. If there were problems with pronunciation I corrected them. Sometimes, in these types of activities, I have done phonetic transcriptions of particularly tough words, using Avery and Ehrlich's (1992) modified version of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). One reason is that some of my students (especially those educated in the People's Republic of China) have some prior experience using IPA. Another reason is related again to the high

emphasis on literate knowledge and related dictionary use for Chinese L1 speakers. Also, for reasons of both age and gender, physical constraints and familial responsibilities (reflecting the degree of patriarchal control over education and movement exerted in the household; see Morgan, 1997; Rockhill & Tomic, 1994) severely curtail the amount of L2 oral interaction that many of the women and seniors experience for purposes of self-assessment and modification.

In class, after each student, I would repeat the passage and check for problems pertaining to specific words, phrases or sentences. Usually students' requests pertain to specific words. Based on my research in L2 vocabulary acquisition and my teaching experiences at CCSAT, I follow two alternating and sometimes complementary strategies in response. One is to defer giving a gloss and instead point out, modify or extrapolate upon contextual cues and various cohesive elements for inferencing. As mentioned earlier this can be frustrating as many students are reluctant to guess. The other strategy, also discussed before, is to have one or two students check their dictionaries, compare in their L1, and then translate the denotative meaning to me orally so that we might collectively judge its appropriateness for the specific passage in the text.

After we completed this stage, I placed students in small groups for a speaking activity. On the board I wrote a number of vocabulary items (i.e. words and phrases) and various comprehension questions related to the article, which I wanted the students to discuss: (on the blackboard)

A) Vocabulary: What do these words and phrases mean in the story? intentionally vague; a strong attachment to Canada; an argument over semantics; referendum; decentralization of powers; a mandate; a blank cheque.

B) Questions: Discuss in your group.

1) What do the federalists/separatists think about the referendum question?

2) What's your opinion?

3) Name three federalist and sovereignist leaders?

4) Has there ever been a similar problem in your native country?

5.2.6 Post-Reading Questions and Developing Critical Literacy

In formulating the post-reading activity above, I was inspired by some of the critical literacy concepts developed by Ada (1988) and modified by Cummins (1989, pp. 73-75; 1996, pp. 158-161) as well as Scholes (1985), which were adapted by Cherryholmes (1993) for reading pedagogy. Both Ada and Scholes encourage us to recognize reading as not simply the passive reception of fixed meanings encoded in texts, but also as active and creative *production*, where the reading process necessarily generates other texts, both critical and complementary, and with the potential to inspire transformative practice beyond the classroom. In Ada's typology, *descriptive phase* questions, such as #1 and #3 above, elicit information stated explicitly in the text itself. Ada's *personal interpretive phase*, indicated by question #4, generates meanings

based on personal experiences and feelings shared and explored in the classroom. A *critical analysis phase*, as implied by question #2, involves meanings that pertain to issues and propositions put forward: Are they valid? Whose interests are served here? A *creative action phase* is when textual meanings define and initiate potential action outside the classroom (Cummins, 1996, pp. 158-161).

In examining the questions above, it is neither necessary nor advisable, in terms of pedagogy, to conceive of them as functionally reducible to singular categories. In my experience, Ada's phases naturally overlap and reinforce each other in group work. For example, question #1, may initially appear to be a descriptive phase type, yet on closer examination the issue of vocabulary selection suggests analyses more characteristic of a critical action phase. As I indicated to my students, lexical items such as *separatist* (including *separation* or the verb *to separate*) are ideological and politicized in contemporary Canada/Quebec relations. To position someone as a separatist alludes to breaking away from a country, a more negative connotation, rather than building a new one, a more positive, underlying value associated with the sovereignist moniker. The fact that many federal politicians and English language newspapers emphasize the former is no accident, but a reflection of the volatility of Quebec public opinion and the more favorable reception given to the notion of sovereignty or sovereignty-association as a "moderate" (i.e. "Canadian-like") course of political action. For this reason, both separatist and sovereignist were placed in the questions to provoke discussion and awareness of how texts/words can be used to

"position" people (see Carter, 1987, pp. 92-96; Janks, 1991, 1993, 1997a, 1997b; Morgan, 1995/1996, 1998; Rule, 1993; Kress, 1990).

In a post-reading activity, many of my students have already determined the kinds of texts they will produce in relation to a particular class reading, question, or lexical item regardless of the parameters I have intended to set. But some have not, and the careful construction of questions, following the ideas developed by Scholes and Ada, is a useful way of orienting students towards an expanded set of textual practices that might otherwise remain unexplored. In this way, we are better able to "assist students in perceiving the potent aura of codification that surrounds every verbal text. Our job is not to produce 'readings' for our students but to give them the tools for producing their own" (Scholes cited in Cherryholmes, 1993, p. 4).

5.2.7 Discussion and Answers from the Newspaper Article

The vocabulary discussion in the post-reading activity helped many students to rethink and clarify the types of difficulties they experienced in lesson one. In the article, "intentionally vague" was a referendum descriptor used by Alberta Premier, Ralph Klein, in the context of claiming that Quebecers "would not be fooled" (Stewart, 1995). Klein's view echoed the concern of many federalists, who argued that the fuzziness of the question was an intent to deceive voters. As the federal referendum minister, Lucienne Robillard, noted in the article (Stewart, 1995) that there was no reference to the word 'country' after 'sovereign' nor any mention of

'independence' or 'separation'. In contrast, Premier Lucien Bouchard (then leader of the Bloc Quebecois) was quoted as saying that "the question was clear" and that federalist complaints were just "an argument over 'semantics'" (Stewart, 1995).

Focusing on this dispute through the examination of key vocabulary, a bottom-up strategy, was important in that it indicated to students that the source of indeterminacy could be external to their own L2 competencies or interlanguage development. Discussion over "intentionally vague" and "an argument over semantics" reframed the earlier debate over authoritative meanings and contradistinctions between sovereignty and independence. The correct meanings were not just "out there" waiting to be gleaned from the best dictionary or transmitted through a "banking" mode of pedagogy (see Freire, 1997). Rather, they were being deferred and dispersed, in Derrida's sense. The dispute, in this perspective, was not so much on which meaning was most correct but whose frame of reference would gain ascendancy: literal or figurative, denotative or connotative, textual or intertextual, our history or yours? When opportunities occurred, I would reiterate this perspective to the students.

One of my students said the confusion reminded her of the Basic Law negotiated between England and China for the postcolonial administration in Hong Kong. Another student referred to Hong Kong as an analogy to explain Quebecers' mixed sentiments. In reference to "a strong attachment to Canada", she said, "Hong Kong people love China, but have a strong attachment to England." This observation was particularly important in that it evoked experiential

meanings/texts that were a powerful illustration of why and how a choice between terms, sovereignty and independence, might be of pragmatic consequence. Expanding on her comment, I then asked the students which word would be easier to vote "yes" for if you had mixed feelings? They all said "sovereignty".

The metaphor of a "blank cheque", used by then Conservative Leader Jean Charest in the article, was very popular and also served as an excellent illustration of deferred meaning. We went over the literal and figurative movement between both signing a cheque and marking a ballot without having either numbers or names on the form. The meaning of "mandate" was compared to "blank cheque". I pointed out that they both had the same referential identity, but that the former term was relatively neutral, while the latter was explicitly intended to have negative connotations (see Carter, 1987, p. 92). The "decentralization of powers" was an opportunity to talk briefly about the various levels of government and respective jurisdictions in Canada. We also talked about the implications of decentralization, particularly around national standards for health care and immigration policies.

One discussion around question #4 was particularly thought provoking. Several students said that something like the Quebec referendum could never happen in China because the leaders would be arrested and shot. One student stated that a country couldn't function with these types of internal disputes constantly going on. He then suggested that the Canadian army should be sent in to prevent this and future referenda from occurring. Another older student replied that she wouldn't want her grandson to have to go to Quebec

to fight in a war. For myself, I was reminded of how much we take for granted in Canada. Such exchanges -- especially when expressed from survivors of warfare and revolution -- reminded me of the underlying fragility of civil conduct and the surprising ease with which relations of mutual respect can deteriorate into acts of violence. As a language teacher, I also reflected on the many complex ways that language can be used to incite or prevent conflict amongst social groups.

5.2.8 Reading an Article from the Chinese Press

The next day, one of my students brought in an article from the local Chinese press (Tsing Dao Newspaper, Sept. 15, 1995, p. C14) with a translation of the referendum question and an article in Chinese outlining its controversial aspects. I made copies for the entire class and then asked them to compare this piece with the previous day's article in English. The Chinese article was particularly helpful for lower level students in understanding difficult vocabulary and ideas from the day before. Small group discussions in both Cantonese and English helped clarify the issues involved in the referendum. I went around the room asking various groups to point out specific differences for me. Of note, the Chinese article suggested that the projected annual Quebec deficit of 3.9 billion dollars could rise as high as 15-20 billion after a yes vote. Students also noted that in contrast with the English article, few quotes from politicians were included in the Chinese piece. Also, the Chinese article provided background material on the previous Quebec referendum vote in

1980. In a humorous aside, one student asked why the Quebec Premier at the time, Jacques Parizeau, is clapping in a picture included with the article. In reference to a then widely-circulated quote from the premier, another student replied, "He's smiling because he's caught people in a trap."

The benefits of introducing an L1 article on the referendum should not be underestimated. At CCSAT, and most community-based programs, classes are mixed-streamed. Indeed, precarious funding based on attendance numbers only increases this reality. As well, CCSAT has a strong bilingual program for basic level classes, so the experience of L1 in the ESL classroom has been an integral part of L2 language study for those who have come through the program. At the least, what the article helped do is to reiterate that confusion around the vocabulary and referendum question was not simply a reflection of limitations in their developing L2 abilities. From this, lower level students felt more confident to participate in group discussions, after which many recognized that ambiguity could be an intention of language users and one characteristic of contemporary political struggle in Canada.

The final lesson on the Quebec referendum followed the next day. Its focus was on grammar forms that might help the students with difficulties I observed during the previous activities described above. The following chapter discusses L2 pedagogical grammar at some length, not as an indication of the classroom time spent on these activities, but rather as a means of elaborating and substantiating earlier themes (e.g. the discourses of ESL and passive

citizenship practice; community ESL pedagogy as both reflexive and transformative practice).

CHAPTER 6

A DIALOGUE IN TWO DOMAINS, PART 1: PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR

6.1 INTRODUCTION: WHY DIALOGUE?

The two domains I refer to in the title of this chapter are pedagogical grammar and L2 vocabulary teaching, both key areas of ESL and important aspects of the lessons described in the previous chapter on the 1995 Quebec Referendum at CSSAT. As before, this chapter explores both the possibilities and discursive constraints for critical ESL citizenship practices, but with a particular focus on the two domains noted above. Over chapters six and seven, this exploration will be undertaken as a dialogue of sorts: On the one hand, I will draw upon several critical theories and pedagogies to enhance the possibilities for transformative practice in L2 pedagogical grammar and vocabulary learning. On the other, I will examine specialized areas of expertise generated from within these two ESL specializations and suggest several ways in which they might advance some of the emancipatory goals to which critical pedagogies aspire.

The underlying rationale and form for this dialogue is best explained by way of a short synopsis of an important article by Dunn and Lantolf (1998), in which they address the relative merits and limitations of Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) and Krashen's *i+1* in SLA research. Using a term that links the various themes of their discussion, the authors depict Krashen and

Vygotsky's respective constructs as "incommensurable" -- without common measure -- since they logically derive from radically different ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding the nature of reality and the possibilities for human knowledge. According to the authors, the numerous cases in which SLA researchers have tried to relate *ZPD* and *i+1*, or describe their complementarity for pedagogical purposes, have been based on an inadequate or superficial understanding of the underlying conceptual frameworks that define both. In short, Krashen's construct is inherently *dualistic* -- a mind/nature dichotomy -- in that it depicts language development as an autonomous, predictable, and invariant mentalistic property directed by a Language Acquisition Device (Cf. Chomsky, in Allen & Van Buren, 1971, pp. 14-15), whose primary functionings are unmediated by the social contexts of learning. In a somewhat narrow reading of Krashen's work, Dunn and Lantolf (1998) state, "The *i+1* formula, then, represents what will be acquired next, not what is in the course of maturing" (p. 422). In contrast, the authors describe Vygotsky's *ZPD* as a monistic and dialectical process, insofar as both development and learning are mutually determining and shaped by the particular discursive contexts (i.e. sociocultural, historical, and interactional) in which individuals participate.

Dunn and Lantolf then transpose the specificity of their discussion onto the discipline of applied linguistics as a whole, noting the theoretical diversity current in the field and the potential for conflict that obtains from this pluralistic state. Others have been down this path before. Guba's (1990) *Paradigm Dialog* was one of the

first collective projects in education to bring together researchers from (post)positivist, constructivist, and critical orientations in the hope of building consensus and increased understanding. Drawing on this work, Lynch (1996) actually proposes what he calls a "compatibilist" perspective, where elements of both positivistic and naturalistic paradigms are combined for language program evaluation. Also specific to applied linguistics, Pennycook (1994a) takes up the issue of incommensurability by way of a comparative analysis of *discourse* from sociolinguistic, systemic-functionalist and Foucaultian perspectives.

What these various texts illustrate are the profound differences that promise to make a constructive dialogue immensely difficult, if not impossible. At a foundational level, for example, the univocal world view characteristic of positivism and post-positivism depicts competing or coexisting models of the natural and social world as threats to validity, conceptualizations to be either verified or falsified in light of what is presumed to be a singular and universal "reality". Postmodernists, or those working within the naturalistic paradigm (Lynch, 1996), can be equally doctrinaire, asserting a kind of heterodoxy in which all truth claims must be viewed as equally valid given the absence of a single arbitrator, meta-discourse, or shared teleological assumptions with which to measure and rank their respective positions.

This leaves the ESL profession on strange and unfirm ground, as suggested by Dunn and Lantolf. While peaceful coexistence is preferable to conflict in the paradigmatic debate, coexistence alone does not contribute anything to disciplinary knowledge. The goal of

ESL theoreticians, in their view, should be to work towards forms of mutual understanding and dialogic engagement that might enrich the ESL profession. Inspired by Habermas's discourse ethics (see Benyabib, 1990; Corson, 1993; Wellmer, 1991), Dunn and Lantolf's priorities for such a dialogue are not framed in terms of discovering ultimate truths but rather in terms of building consensus around the types of formal procedures that enable dialogic engagement to develop between those who adhere to profoundly different notions of language and language education:

Theoretical discourses that differ from our own deserve to be engaged as much as we engage other languages and the people who speak them. The vistas opened up by such encounters enhance immeasurably the opportunities for self-reflection and appreciation for other ways of organizing the world and of mediating peoples' relationship to it. As when interacting with speakers of other languages and different world views, the greater theoretical diversity we experience, the better understanding we achieve of our own native ... theory and its place in the larger scheme of things. (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998, p. 433).

This chapter takes up the challenge that Dunn and Lantolf pose for applied linguistics. In order to move the dialogue forward, critical theory should not be used as a "meta-discourse"; that is, as a putatively objective form of adjudication with which to strategically dismiss or undermine the validity of ESL's key constructs, modes of discovery, and terms of reference. To reiterate an earlier point made in regards to research, mastery of the postmodern vernacular, in and of itself, should not confer license to pass ultimate judgement on the status of other disciplinary codes. Instead, as Dunn and Lantolf

(1998) suggest, when "contesting and defending validity claims in communicative action, interlocutors come to reflect upon, and potentially reinterpret, their own view of things" (p. 430).

These are indeed good guidelines to follow. Yet, to my mind, one crucial component of a genuine dialogue seems lacking in Dunn and Lantolf's discussion, and the incommensurability that they identify in their *ZPD* versus *i+1* debate may be considerably less than indicated. Granted these constructs represent divergent views regarding language learning and development. Nonetheless, the manner in which these constructs have been produced, defined, and disseminated as *theory* suggests a great deal of commensurability underlies their discussion. Specifically, for many practitioners, the participants in the types of academic debates Dunn and Lantolf describe seem more like privileged adversaries, and the theoretical discord they identify only superficially masks the convergence of interests around the rules of participation/exclusion and theory formation that classroom language teachers are realistically excluded from.

I would argue that a crucial component for any genuine paradigm dialogue to proceed must begin by granting equal status to teachers' experiences, intuitions and explanatory models. Pedagogy, in this perspective, is not simply a site to affirm or refute the validity of pre-existing constructs such as *ZPD* or *i+1*. Instead we might think of the sites and experiences of pedagogy, themselves, as measures of what is or what might be "incommensurable", or conversely, what might be complementary within a particular community setting. To this end, we might cite Henry Giroux (1994),

who points out a rather striking paradox in a disciplinary field to which he has been a major theoretical contributor: "Cultural studies is too rigidly tied to the modernist, academic disciplinary structures that it often criticizes. ... Lost here is the attempt to understand pedagogy as a mode of cultural criticism for questioning the very conditions under which knowledge and identities are produced" (p. 280). Giroux's critique of postmodern discourses can be applied even more rigorously to disciplines such as applied linguistics, whose primary orientations to knowledge construction have been formed within the modernist and positivist tradition (see Corson, 1997; Pennycook, 1991; 1994b).

For the purposes of a paradigm dialogue, two crucial points can be drawn from Giroux's statement. First, even within cultural studies, a discipline conceptually oriented towards situatedness, incommensurability, and power relations, those who might best illuminate the contingencies and salient features of practice (as they relate to constructs such as *ZPD* and *i+1*) are still systematically constrained in doing so. Second, *ZPD* and *i+1*, are not just models or hypotheses about learning. Invariably, they get taken up in the profession and converted into language curricula. And the manner in which they are transposed upon a particular teaching environment will have significant effects on the negotiation of identities within and outside the classroom (see Cummins, 1996). The specificity by which these constructs become normative, *social* practices rather than cognitive models, as Giroux rightly points out, can only be ascertained from the contingencies of pedagogy. Without the perspectives of teachers, Dunn and Lantolf's measure of

(in)compatibility seems partial at best, in Giroux's (1994) words, "too rigidly tied to the modernist, academic disciplinary structures" they seek to transform through dialogue (p. 280).

In this chapter, and in keeping with the priorities of community-based ESL pedagogies, any dialogue should begin by acknowledging the paradigmatic significance of both theory and practice. Based on accounts of classroom practices around citizenship and the Quebec referendum, theoretical issues are raised, refuted and modified to reflect what transpired during lessons on pedagogical grammar and L2 vocabulary. The ground rules for such a discussion are set by Dunn and Lantolf: Critical pedagogies must directly engage with the values and constructs that define ESL's existing knowledge base in the two domains I have chosen. Moreover, the principle of constructive dialogue requires that critical pedagogies remain open to reinterpretation based on this engagement. And from Giroux, the central role of pedagogy is affirmed. Drawing on my experiences from the classroom, I will examine how a lesson in pedagogical grammar might help us both understand and potentially transform "the very conditions under which knowledge and identities are produced" (Giroux, 1994, p. 280). In this endeavor, I will propose areas of complementarity -- particularly for the purposes of critical citizenship -- in what otherwise might be identified as "incommensurable discourses" (Cf. Pennycook, 1994a).

6.2 PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR IN A COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PEDAGOGY

The last lesson on the Quebec referendum focused on grammar awareness. Problems with structural accuracy had been evident from the previous activities, so I decided to organize a lesson specifically focussed on one or two formal features relevant to the students' discussions. Two aspects of the classroom treatment and underlying rationale will be examined. First, in keeping with the notion of bottom-up or lexically-driven instruction, the transition from initial vocabulary focus followed later by syntactical and morphological attention is indicative of what Little and Singleton (1991, pp. 127-128) see as a natural progression -- the "priority of lexis" -- in first and second language acquisition. Consistent with my own classroom observations and the treatment of language activities in this chapter, "learners apparently find it easier to deal with issues of structure after they have used words to create skeletal discourse" (Little & Singleton, 1991, pp. 127-128). The hypothesized priority of lexis in acquisition serves as the basis for several interesting activities that Little and Singleton have developed to help students read authentic texts. For example, prior to reading, students sort key words into categories (e.g. people, places, time, events), arrange them in linear order, then construct a story line by adding other grammatical elements (Little & Singleton, 1991, pp.124-126).

In regards to research and theory, I would not generalize my own classroom observations regarding the "priority of lexis" to the degree that Little and Singleton have. Nor would I depict natural

cognitive and acquisitional processes as the primary causal variable to the exclusion of socialized and community-based learning experiences. Nonetheless, Little and Singleton's work marks an important trend that includes recent theoretical interest in the constitutive role that lexis plays in parameter setting in Universal Grammar (see Cook, 1994) as well as increasing development of lexis-oriented teaching approaches for L2 methodology (see Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1997, p. 146; Cummins, 1998a; Little & Singleton, 1991). The larger issue that I see in this trend is a growing interest -- a return of the pendulum, of sorts -- in providing learners with explicit instruction on the formal properties and regularities of language, irrespective of the degree to which the outcome of such instruction is or is not directly convertible to "intake" (see Ellis, 1985, 1993; Krashen, 1988). The growth in "consciousness raising" (Yip, 1994), "language awareness" (James & Garrett, 1991; van Lier, 1996), "weak" forms of task-based instruction (Skehan, 1996), and increased attention to form and word composition in L2 vocabulary pedagogies (see Corson, 1995; Cummins, 1998b, McCarthy & O'Dell, 1997) all allude to the limitations of induction or incidental learning as the sole strategy for the acquisition of form/structure in communicative language teaching.

Certainly the research above supports both the rationale and sequencing of the grammar activity I will describe below. But I should emphasize that my lesson was not necessarily deduced from this specific material. Rather, its inclusion here is post hoc for purposes of outlining compatibilities in the current ESL literature. In regards to issues raised in chapter one, its important to note that

direct approaches, indeed grammar-translation and various drills, have always been a feature of language pedagogy at CSSAT. In this regard, many of my colleagues have prioritized local, community needs and experiences of language learning over the fluctuating and often polemical arguments on direct versus natural methods in SLA as based putatively on universal, scientific principles.⁸ If anything has changed, it is the willingness of some teachers to talk about or demonstrate their favoured practices in front of TESOL-trained supervisors now that explicit instruction is fashionable once again.

The second aspect of treatment pertains to the conceptualization of direct grammar instruction and a particular theoretical approach that I have found beneficial. In chapter one, I noted that syllabus designs were based primarily on theories of SLA and descriptive linguistics (e.g. analytic or synthetic approaches, see Nunan, 1988), or more recently on dichotomized idealizations of the L2 learner and language environment (e.g. native/non-native,

⁸ It is important to mention how these major changes in applied linguistic theory are rhetorically constructed. In regards to a return to "direct" grammar instruction, Celce-Murcia et al. (1997) speak of "a *significant shift* in language teaching methodology, comparable to the *fundamental changes* of the 1970s" (p. 142, emphasis mine). Shortly after, they note that "L2 teaching methods and approaches tend to undergo a *natural process of cyclical development*: A method or approach is first proposed ... then accepted, applied and eventually criticized" (p. 142, emphasis mine). Note how, through the deletion of agency, these developments appear disinterested and procedural, an inherent aspect of scientific progress, rather than an outcome of discursive practices (see Benesch, 1993; Pennycook; 1989, 1994a), not least of all the role that "discovery" plays in academic career advancement (see Lakoff, 1990). Words such as "significant" and "fundamental" further serve to enhance the self-importance attributed to the most current proposition. What is absent in this "cyclical" explanation is the core requirement of theory hegemony -- the need to refute or falsify apparently "contradictory" data -- in the (post) positivistic paradigm (see Guba, 1990; Lynch, 1996). What is also missing are accounts of the havoc wreaked on community programs when told by administrators and supervisors that what they do well is no longer adequate based on the "latest research".

ESL/EFL; see Nayar, 1997, for an excellent critique), which have been the source of various inventories of functions, notions, tasks, and competencies pertinent to communication in a variety of contexts or situations (see Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 1996; Nunan, 1988; Skehan, 1996). In terms of classroom materials, my first hand experience has been that many pedagogical texts based on these models overemphasize syllabus cohesion (i.e. sequencing, grading of items, methodology) at the expense of intrinsically motivating and socially relevant subject matter, a counter-productive development, in my opinion.

Given the emphasis I have placed on negotiating identities in a community-based ESL pedagogy, an important consideration would be in regards to how one goes about conceptualizing direct grammar instruction when linguistic and cognitive assumptions, narrowly defined, no longer form the primary motivation for a pedagogical grammar. Based on the discursive construction of poststructural subjectivity, for example, we might explore, more formally and systematically, the constitutive role that form (e.g. lexis, syntax, morphology, phonology) plays in *creating* a specific representation of social reality (i.e. a particular subject position; see Fairclough, 1989, p.39; Morgan, 1995/1996; Peirce, 1990; Simon, 1992; Weedon, 1987). Grammar pedagogy in this view could not be treated exclusively as an extension of an autonomous system, one which corresponded to either a fixed, external system of signs as in Saussurean structuralism or an innate transformational-generative grammar as defined by Chomsky. Attention to form or pedagogical grammar, instead, might be conceived contingently and reflexively; that is, as a

condition of entry into a particular speech situation, but also as a means by which the various constraints or conventions of the situation (including the linguistic rules of entry) might be transformed in an overt or covert way.

In an earlier article (Morgan, 1997b), I explored these types of concerns in a discussion of a classroom activity that developed awareness of sentence level intonation as a strategic resource to challenge forms of ascription based on gender and ethnicity. To this end, I examined several advantages of Halliday's (1985) social-semiotic theory for the emerging interest in identity work in ESL. Halliday's theory seeks to provide a systematic account of how social experience, interpersonal relationships and language intentions are embedded within the structure of language (Cf. Halliday's notion of *register*, Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Hyon, 1996, p. 697). Every sentence is described in terms of its multifunctionality and co-occurrence in varied conceptual fields. To understand the meanings of a sentence, "we do not look separately at its different parts; rather, we look at the whole thing simultaneously from a number of different angles, each perspective contributing towards the total interpretation" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p.23). This layered or sedimented perspective is further enhanced through a "continuity of description" (Kress, 1976, p. xi) whereby the smallest linguistic units are explained in relation to the largest contextual units to reflect the various functions that language is intended to serve in a given situation. The implications of Halliday's ideas for pedagogical grammar are outlined in an excellent article by Hasan and Perrett (1994).

The teacher's task is to sensitize students to the lexicogrammar as the resource for meaning, and meaning as the artifact of lexicogrammatical choice in social contexts. In order to be effective, a pedagogical grammar must break the bonds of "form" to reach out into concerns of meaning and social context on a systematic rather than an ad hoc basis. These observations suggest two related conclusions: 1. Teachers need to be sensitive to linguistic functionality...they need to be able to relate saying to meaning and meaning to the perception and creation of social contexts. 2. Students' learning of any element is likely to be facilitated and made more effective if the same three foci are kept in view: the properties of a formal pattern - both paradigmatic and syntagmatic ones; the semantic value(s) of that formal pattern; the context(s) in which the choice of the pattern is possible. (1994, p. 205)

Of course, in a theoretical dialogue, the notion of systematicity can be understood in various ways. In the context of a community-based ESL pedagogy, where social and ideological concerns have equal status with linguistic ones, I would try to realize this condition in terms of what Peirce (1997 [Norton], 1995) has defined as *investment* in her poststructural investigation of social identity and language learning. "The construct of investment conceives of the language learner as having a complex history and multiple desires. An investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, which changes across time and place" (Norton, 1997, p. 411). In terms of dialogic engagement, investment, in the sense defined by Peirce, might be considered as the entry point for the initiation of consciousness raising, language awareness, and the organization of a pedagogical grammar lesson, which included the formal foci identified by Hasan and Perrett above.

"Grammar as meaningful choice in context" -- a Hallidayan proposition -- would be reconceptualized to address notions of the de-centred, poststructural subject, whose choices and desires -- shaped by the discourses in which he or she receives and formulates meanings -- no longer originate entirely from within nor are they clearly defined objectives appraised solely through conscious and rational measure. Certain explanatory priorities come to mind: How might a pedagogical grammar articulate "complex histor[ies] and multiple desires"? And equally important, how might it assist in clarifying or realizing changes "across time and place", which were desirable for our students?

I can better elaborate upon these difficult ideas with reference to the Quebec referendum. As mentioned before, the Quebec referendum was being evaluated through the re-acquisition of Hong Kong. Events and comments in the class indicated that this was a profoundly dialogical process, in the critical and explorative sense one associates with Freire; that is, as personal beliefs, conventional wisdom, and future predictions regarding the one event changed, various emotional, financial, and familial commitments, pertaining to the other were reconsidered and in some instances revised. A degree of bitterness was also evident. Many came to Canada to escape instability only to perceive it as equally present in Canada. To reiterate Peirce's (1995) perspective, it would not be inappropriate to characterize students identities in this case as "multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change" (p.20). Based on these dynamic conditions, two aspects of treatment seemed appropriate for consciousness-raising: 1) Make the intertextuality of Hong Kong and

Quebec an explicit feature, and thus mutually informing, of a direct grammar lesson. 2) Introduce a particular subsystem of lexicogrammar (following the above criteria set forth by Hasan and Perrett) through which feelings/meanings of ambivalence, apprehension, inclination, and potentiality regarding the future, and one's place in it, are expressed. In terms of the latter, I selected the field of *modality*, in the broad sense, where language functions to express a "speaker's intersubjectivity, whereby social relations are created, maintained, and, in time, changed. The environment, par excellence, for the workings of modality is the dialogic one" (Hasan & Perrett, 1994, p. 207).

6.2.1 Grammar Lesson on the Quebec Referendum/ Hong Kong '97

To begin the grammar activity, I mentioned to the students that although several had tried to talk about the implications of a 'yes' or 'no' vote, their intentions and feelings were not often clear to me. I then reviewed several structures that can be used to express judgements on varying degrees of *likelihood*, an area of modality pertinent to our lessons (see also "epistemic" modality, Huddleston, 1988, p. 78). As noted by Lock (1996) in his book, *Functional English Grammar*, "expressions of likelihood can include: modal auxiliaries (e.g. *might*, *may*, and *should*), modal adjuncts (e.g. *definitely* and *probably*), attributive clauses (e.g. *I'm certain*, *It's likely*, and *I'm sure*), [and] mental process clauses of cognition (e.g. *I think* and *I doubt*)" (p.194). Prior to the referendum, we had already examined

several forms of prediction and likelihood in a book called *Communicative Grammar Practice* (Jones, 1992). Jones (1992, p.74) provides a short description of both personal and impersonal forms (e.g. *It looks/It sounds as if; There's a chance*) as well as degrees of likelihood (e.g. im/probability, im/possibility, un/certainty) in the present and past. Jones also provides examples of modal adjuncts with negative polarity to rank degree (e.g. *It probably won't rain*). Following Jones' forms and categories, I placed the following examples pertaining to the referendum on the board for discussion, emphasizing the predictive distinctions of likelihood.

Certainty after a NO vote:

- 1) The Canadian dollar will go up.
- 2) I'm absolutely sure (that) the Canadian dollar will go up.
- 3) I'm certain/sure (that) the Canadian economy will improve.

Probability after a YES vote:

- 4) Many Anglophones will probably leave Quebec.
- 5) It looks as if Quebecers won't be allowed to keep two passports.
- 6) Relations between Quebec and Canada are likely to be difficult.

The content matter for these sentences had come from previous classroom discussions. The three variations on 'certainty' and fiscal/economic matters reflected the intense interest in such matters, and it provided an opportunity to elaborate on the subtle shifts and relative emphases provided through the various choices of attribution and modalization. For example, most students easily recognized that the second sentence indicated a slightly stronger position of certainty than the third based on the adjunct 'absolutely'. But in the first, the use of 'will' to express high likelihood was slightly ambiguous for some because of its overlapping function in

expressing future tense (see Lock, 1996, p.196; Huddleston, 1988, p.81).

I also talked briefly about the strategic differences and potential consequences when choosing between personal (e.g. #2, 3) and impersonal attribution. Sentences using declarative mood, and especially #4 with its hypothetical "as if" clause and non-referential subject (i.e. 'it'), tend to defer the speaker's personal responsibility for the judgement and content of an utterance. But as I reminded the students, in some contexts and interpersonal relationships, sentences that appear impersonal can be powerful rhetorical tools in that they imply "fact" and "objectivity", which are privileged forms of persuasion in our society (see Janks, 1993; Lakoff, 1990; Lemke, 1987, 1989; Morgan, 1998). One student mentioned two favourite "gambits" or strategic markers of displaced attribution from earlier lessons: "According to [an expert]..." and "Some people believe (that)..." This type of critical language awareness -- linking forms, contexts and rhetorical effects -- has been explored in many past lessons. I often mention that taking personal credit for innovative ideas, especially in competitive workplace and academic environments, is not only acceptable but sometimes essential for career advancement in Canada. Conversely, we have also examined contexts in which impersonal attribution advances certain forms of cultural power/politics. One memorable example was a writing activity pertaining to the Gulf War, in which students assumed the role of newspaper reporters (e.g. *Baghdad Herald* or *The London Times*) and used forms and selected vocabulary that implicitly aggrandized or demonized respective adversaries under the guise of

reporting and documentation (see Morgan, 1992/1993, 1998, pp. 35-36).

The role of newspapers was also pertinent to this specific activity because several students had mentioned that the major Hong Kong newspapers were "more careful" or "silent" about any negative predictions for the future after China's reacquisition. In retrospect, it would have been interesting to have the students do a contrastive analysis of the forms used to be "more careful" in Chinese and English. Due to time constraints, however, I used the example to simply reiterate the larger point that language choices are shaped by power relations and the degree to which governments and dominant social groups can enforce compliance. To my mind, these types of interconnecting analyses -- a "continuity of description" -- would be a particular strength of a pedagogical grammar based on Hallidayan principles and addressed to issues of developing active and critical citizenship. What contexts and interpersonal relationships make the choice and degrees of attribution most persuasive? What combinations of lexis, syntax, and phonology are necessary to realize this choice? What are the potential rewards and punishments for following, modifying or breaking the "rules"? These types of questions, which seek to identify systemic relationships between form/structure and ideological practices, are characteristic of the pursuits of researchers interested in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (see Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1990, 1991; Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1990; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Janks, 1991, 1993, 1997a, 1997b; Lemke, 1989; Wodak, 1990). Not surprisingly, most cite Halliday's work as foundational.

After the discussion of the model sentences above, I placed the class in small groups and asked them to talk about the implications for Canada and Quebec after a 'yes' or 'no' referendum vote, using some of the forms described above. I also made predictions of Hong Kong's future after 1997 an option. I told each group to write down any sentences that were similar to the ones on the board and interesting for their group. During the activity, I went around the room to listen and make suggestions regarding intentions and choice of forms. Since I was providing corrections and suggestions throughout the group activity, the accuracy of the examples below does not reflect the degree to which my earlier consciousness-raising may or may not have facilitated productive knowledge of structure. The following examples were produced by students and placed on the board for discussion.

- 1) We're absolutely sure that China is going to take over Hong Kong in 1997.
- 2) I'm certain that Hong Kongers won't be able to keep two passports.
- 3) Quebecers won't be fooled by the duplicity.
- 4) Some of the Chinese people are likely to leave Quebec.
- 5) Canada is not likely to treat Quebec as an equal partner in economic and political affairs.
- 6) After a yes vote, the federalist leaders will probably have a meeting to talk about a new treaty with Quebec.
- 7) It's likely that the Hong Kong immigration laws will change in 1997.
- 8) After a yes vote, it's likely that Quebecers won't be allowed to keep a Canadian passport.

I would like to extrapolate from these sentences as a way of substantiating and reiterating Hasan and Perrett's (1994) comments regarding the field of modality as a site of dialogic engagement and intersubjectivity, "whereby social relations are created, maintained,

and, in time, changed" (p. 207). As mentioned earlier, the reunification of 1997 signified the experience through which the referendum would be evaluated by these students. The interweaving of these two momentous events, I believe, further encouraged students to explore the meaning potential available through the lexicogrammar system. As well, attention to lexicogrammar should be seen in the context of power relations and Peirce's ([Norton], 1997, 1995) construct of "investment". Whenever a teacher authorizes a language activity, it provides a certain degree of anonymity and deferred attribution for the expression of ideas that potentially undermine the "rules" of group identity. The provision of L2 forms with which to express the subtle degrees of modality enabled students to vocalize controversial ideas and explore the complexity of their own histories and emerging desires for the future.

In #2, for example, the topic of Hong Kong passports was not discussed at any length, if at all, in English during whole class activities. This student's sentence (as well as #7) reflects meanings derived from the debate in the newspaper over Quebecers' status after sovereignty (see e.g. #8). It is an example of reading "text upon text", in Scholes' (1985) perspective. But it is also an indication of identities being negotiated across time and place (see Cummins, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Morgan, 1997). When I asked about the sentence, this student talked about how discussion of the referendum focussed his attention on recent speculation in the Chinese press on this topic. From his comments, I inferred that his specific realization of modality (i.e. personal attribution and high likelihood) evinced multifunctionality in that it was simultaneously predictive and

pragmatic, the latter emphasizing the immediate need to act upon the implications of this likely development for those who frequently travel and work in both Canada and Hong Kong. The strength of the predictive elements served to amplify the urgency felt.

Placing these sentences collectively on the board had other important dialogical possibilities. Sentence #3, indicated the integration of new vocabulary from the Toronto Star article (e.g. duplicity), and it also invoked the position expressed earlier of intentional deception on the part of the PQ, and the need to send in the military to enforce a solution. But by having #6 nearby, intersubjective meanings/options regarding compromise and negotiation were circulated amongst the students. The implications, as I have argued earlier, reach beyond the classroom and have direct bearing on critical citizenship practices. The pedagogical description of competing and contrasting views -- especially from those who ostensibly share core values based on ethnicity -- helps prepare students with a range of linguistic and rhetorical skills with which they might better anticipate and promote controversial views if called upon in their homes and communities (Cf. Ada's critical action phase).

One other grammar problem should be mentioned. Sentence #1 was difficult for me to deal with in the whole class discussion. I tried to explain that the propositional content of the sentence was a future "fact", not really an expression of one's feelings of inclination and potentiality. So the use of personal attribution was inappropriate in this case. I'm not sure my explanation clarified very much. In retrospect, this error might be seen as an example of semantic

overlapping between modality and future tense indicators caused by auxiliaries such as 'will' and 'Be going to'. But reflecting on this sentence, I also see an interesting point to make in the context of CDA and CLA. The appearance of personal attribution -- taking credit for something -- implies some form of agency has occurred or is in process, either in terms of doing something or taking a particular ideological stance in regards to an issue. But if the propositional content includes phenomena in the natural and social world that are clearly not, or are unlikely to be subject to agency, then the sentence is misleading or intentionally deceptive. What comes to mind is the time-honoured political activity of claiming to do much more than is actually accomplished or possible under the circumstances. In the future, this might be an interesting area of CDA to explore in class.

In sum, the examples above and discussion around them indicate how traditional ESL activities, such as a grammar lesson, can be organized in ways that take advantage of the reconceptualizations of identity now current in the ESL literature (see Benesch, 1998; Candlin, 1998; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Morgan, 1997b; Norton [Peirce], 1997; Vandrick, 1997). Once we recognize language as a modality through which identities are continuously displayed, performed, and negotiated -- rather than a linguistic repository of innate and natural characteristics -- the emancipatory possibilities for pedagogy increase accordingly. For several students in my class, this grammar lesson did not just describe preexisting states and beliefs. In the examples above, grammar pedagogy can be seen as initiating and facilitating emergent understandings of what might or might not be possible for oneself and one's community.

6.2.2 A Dialogue on Pedagogical Grammar

My intention, following the advice given by Giroux at the beginning of this chapter, has been to provide a pedagogical perspective on how familiar constructs and methods in grammar teaching might be infused with situated notions of community, power, and social identity. Though certain concepts might appear novel, I believe they have been duly anticipated and encouraged in the ESL literature for some time. Take for instance Allen's (1974) comments on the importance of "asserting the independence of methodological decisions from formal linguistic constraints" in pedagogical grammars (p. 68). As Allen argues, pedagogical grammars need not and should not be subordinate to the "explanatory" values governing formal, descriptive grammars. "[W]hatever statement about grammar 'makes sense' to a student and helps him to achieve a learning task, is in some important sense explanatory" (Allen, 1974, p. 69). Allen (1974) adds that the sources for such explanations are varied and may include "the comparison of two or more languages, the study of both deep and surface structure and the demonstration of language in context without reference to the formal properties of language" (p. 69). Many of these suggestions are present in the grammar treatment described above, if not as an overt aspect of pedagogy then definitely as a key component of the tacit knowledge a practitioner might draw upon to conceptualize and organize a grammar lesson.

Allen's key points are echoed in a more recent compilation edited by Terence Odlin (1994). In the introductory chapter, Odlin (1994) describes pedagogical grammar as a "practically oriented hybrid drawing on work in several fields. As with the fields that contribute to it, pedagogical grammar is not static: Many problems remain to be understood" (p.11). For those orientated towards postmodernism and its tropes, the notion of hybridity is both resonant and ironic coming as it does from an accomplished grammarian. I will be somewhat presumptuous in stating that the most crucial problem alluded to by Odlin may be the depiction and positioning of the social world in pedagogical grammars. This does not mean that social context is ignored by applied linguists but that it has often been depicted as if it were a "social grammar" (see Morgan, 1998, pp. 25-27) in the sense of being either an extension of or subordinated to the types of "explanatory" presuppositions identified by Allen. Once again, such developments might be seen in light of discursive power relations, as Foucault describes them, in which disciplinary fields such as pedagogical grammar selectively draw upon compatible notions of hybridity while excluding or domesticating others that potentially undermine the authority of its current knowledge base.

Reflecting on Odlin's observation, we might ask, "Which academic disciplines and forms of hybridity would be most advantageous for teachers who wish to provide direct and contingently-responsive grammatical instruction?" In terms of enriching our understanding, I have suggested what might be termed an accommodation or dialogue between poststructural notions of

subjectivity and the social and contextual descriptions provided by Halliday and his followers. The pedagogical possibilities here can be clarified with reference to the now well-established critique of Halliday and the systemic-functionalist and genre theorists who have been associated with his work (see Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Harvey, 1993; Hyon, 1996; Pennycook, 1996b).

Due to its broad and extensive descriptive ambitions, Hallidayan linguistics is often perceived as excessively deterministic. This "overly grammaticalised" depiction of social language practices, according to Fairclough (cited in Pennycook, 1996b, p. 168), does not adequately account for agency, language change, and the divergent and idiosyncratic choices that individuals make in their language use (see O'Donnell and Todd, 1991; Corson, 1997; Pennycook, 1994a). Certainly, these types of concerns are justified and easily addressed to any functionalist theory of society or culture, starting with Durkheim's pioneering work in sociology (Giddens, 1971) and Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown's in social anthropology (Kuper, 1973). Anytime we identify function through form and form through function, there is the potential of overlooking or simplifying complex social and ideological processes that shape the experience of identity but are not directly encoded or materially evident in textual practices. And in the classroom, there is the attendant danger of objectifying a singular form/function relationship and using it normatively when instructing or evaluating students.

It seems to me, though, that this critique is somewhat unfair. In Halliday and Hasan's (1985) work aspects of linguistic innovation and social agency are explicitly stated. For example, drawing on their

work in my article on identity and intonation (Morgan, 1997b), I indicated that the use of a particular intonation pattern to surreptitiously achieve particular social goals would have timely and limited use. As a text, it might soon lose its intended ambiguity and become the context against which future "deceptive" utterances would be formed and evaluated (a feature of "intertextuality", Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 47). As noted by Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 47), new meanings arise from the "friction" between text and context and within the larger context of culture. In terms of agency, we might also reiterate Hasan and Perrett's depiction of modality "whereby social relations are created, maintained, and, in time, changed" (Hasan & Perrett, 1994, p. 207). Indeed, Hasan and Perrett (1994) are so bold as to overturn Saussure's classic dichotomy and order of determination by stating that "*parole* permeates *langue*. Language use and language system co-evolve; they are in a dialectic relation" (p.188).

My sense is that the overdetermination ascribed to Hallidayan linguistics is a bit more subtle than several critics have allowed for. Where this tendency might be evident, would be in regards to the way some systemic-functionalists treat social identity, or in Hallidayan parlance, the "intersubjective domain" depicted through the notion of "tenor" (social relationships) and the "interpersonal metafunction" (Hasan & Perrett, 1994, pp. 186-187; Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Specifically, although the theory might account for change and agency, its broad descriptive requirements necessitate a degree of arbitrariness that can be problematic when identifying, ranking and matching salient features of identity with texts and a

particular context of situation. To use Alfred North Whitehead's term, the danger of "misplaced concreteness" becomes an issue when choosing from what is perceived as empirical and material versus intangible and interpretive data in our hierarchies of evidence.

In this regard, Hallidayan linguistics might be seen as susceptible to a set of foundational assumptions characteristic of a rational, humanist subject, whose words and intentions directly "testify to the quality of the feelings that provoke them" (Donoghue, 1984, p. 17).⁹ Sometimes, however, words testify to much more and much less than personal feelings and intentions. Sometimes we are not really sure what or in whose interests words speak even though we have uttered them ourselves. And most often we adjust our self-perception and aspirations based on the circulation and reception of the words we use. So, sometimes a good pedagogical grammar, in contrast to a descriptive grammar, need not take words or their combinations thereof strictly at "face value" nor let them "speak for themselves" when examining corresponding relationships of form and function. Certainly, it should attend to the concrete, regular and apparent. But it should also attempt to articulate contradictions, inchoate desires, complexities, and ambitions yet to be consciously

⁹ The potential difficulty here is indicative of what Bhaskar (1989) defines as "an error of reification", which often occurs when causal relations between agency and structure are hypothesized: "[S]ociety does not exist independently of human agency.... All social structures...depend upon or presuppose social relations" (p. 4). In this sense, we communicate our "feelings" about the world largely or partially unaware of the actual structures that shape the meanings we make and the degree to which our subsequent actions realize or transform the original sources of structuration. Critical realists, such as Bhaskar, resolve this theoretical dilemma by elevating the ontological status of meaning-making activities: "[T]hey are themselves structures" (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 4; see also Corson, 1991, 1997; Lynch 1996).

realized and always embedded within discursive relations of power/knowledge. It is in theorizing these ideas that poststructuralism, in general, and the notion of "investment" (Peirce, 1995), in particular, might complement and expand the social-semiotic perspectives established by Halliday.

6.2.3 Pedagogical Grammar and the (Im)Possibilities for Practical Hybridity

Returning to Dunn and Lantolf's discussion, which prefaced this chapter, we might now ask as to how critical pedagogies, inspired by poststructural notions of discourse and subjectivity, might "reassess" their own priorities based on a dialogic engagement with the concerns of pedagogical grammarians, especially those inspired by Halliday's social-semiotic approach. In order to answer this question, I should reiterate that what I have characterized as a primary asset in Halliday's grammar -- its "continuity of description" (Kress, 1976, p. xi) -- would be viewed with considerable skepticism by many poststructural-inspired colleagues. As stated above, Halliday's representation of identity and social context as embedded in the lexicogrammar of language would be viewed as overly static and deterministic, an inadequate theory for understanding notions of change and human agency. While I have already suggested that these particular "problems" have been somewhat exaggerated by critics, I do believe that there are other important areas of theoretical disagreement which could be termed foundational or paradigmatic, evincing areas of incommensurability on a par with the

conceptual differences cited by Dunn and Lantolf in their discussion of Vygotsky's *ZPD* and Krashen's *i+1*. The issue of concern, from the perspective of poststructuralism, would not be the unique features of Halliday's approach *per se*, as it would relate to a pronounced suspicion of any theory of language, grammar system, or analytic schema which purported to *represent* an ontological reality "outside" the determination of discourses (Cf. Foucault; see Cherryholmes, 1988; Rosenau, 1992; Shea, 1998; Weedon, 1987).

The substance of these foundational differences are thoughtfully detailed in Pennycook's (1994a) comparative analysis of *discourse* from sociolinguistic, systemic-functionalist (Hallidayan), and Foucauldian perspectives. In discussing the particular shortcomings of the "neo-Hallidayan" school of CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 1985), Pennycook (1994a) is unambiguous in his critique of the ontological (beliefs about the nature of "reality"), epistemological (the relationship between the knower and that reality), and the methodological assumptions (how we discover and impart knowledge) that are logically derived from the (neo)Hallidayan model: "[I]t tends to posit a 'real' world that is obfuscated by ideology" (p. 125). Regarding methodology, "The estimable, though I believe problematic task, of the critical linguist, then, is to help remove this veil of obscurity and help people to see the 'truth'" (p. 125). Such an approach, according to Pennycook, "is subject to a *representational fallacy*, whereby a 'real world' of social relations is represented in language" (p. 126; emphasis mine). Arising from this "false" epistemology, texts (the micro level) are analyzed with the intent of revealing either their distortive or facilitative

understanding of the "way things really are." If language does not correspond to this putative reality, its various "misrepresentations" are subjected primarily to socioeconomic, class-based articulations, thereby obscuring other forms of power and inequality based on race or gender, for example (Pennycook, 1994a, pp. 125-126).

To revisit a key concept from chapter one, Foucault's conceptualization of discourse is profoundly different. Whereas Halliday's ontology would be termed realist, Foucault rejects the notion of a "reality" outside of discourses. Whereas the neo-Hallidayans see knowledge as potentially reversing -- progressively and cumulatively -- the effects of power and ideological distortion, Foucault depicts power/knowledge as inextricable and dynamic, each new advance in knowledge expanding the possibilities for domination of the subject. Hence, from the perspective of poststructuralist notions of discourse and subjectivity, the "representational fallacy" that underpins Halliday's sociocontextual grammar would arguably be as pervasive as the incommensurabilities that Dunn and Lantolf have distinguished between Vygotsky and Krashen's models of language acquisition. Given these important conceptual differences, it would appear that any attempts towards conceptual integration would be futile. Nonetheless, and based on my experiences in ESL classrooms, I would like to sketch out a few areas where constructive dialogue and practical hybridity are worth exploring.

To begin, I would like to reiterate an earlier point that theoretical foundations alone -- in this case, comparative notions of representational authenticity -- should not solely determine our

course of action in classrooms. Instead, we might find it more useful to inquire as to how some students would use an "overly grammaticalised" model, such as Halliday's, to their own advantage and for purposes that enable forms of empowerment and identity negotiation that otherwise would not have occurred. I would also argue that poststructural concerns for difference and identity negotiation are implicated here. If we, as critical practitioners, avoid formal models of sociocontextual representation (based on their theoretical or foundational inadequacies), we may be ignoring one of the central experiences of L2 learners' subjectivity.

Pedagogical grammar could be viewed as a key cognitive resource for challenging language and power relations in the community. Grammar, from the genre perspective outlined by Cope and Kalantzis (1993), is an important "heuristic for analyzing the relation of text to social purpose" (p.20). Given the prior development of a *metalanguage*,¹⁰ ESL students are favourably predisposed -- in contrast to monolingual students -- towards making abstractions and generalizations that link the microstructures of texts to the discursive macrostructures of society (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; The New London Group, 1996). Similarly, Janks (1991) notes that "discourse is, amongst other things, a linguistic construction" (p. 192). If, as Fairclough (1989) states, "being constrained is a precondition of

¹⁰ Poststructuralism is opposed to the notion of a "metalanguage" or "metadiscourse", in that these constructs are positioned as "master narratives" in relation to the object language or discourse that is the focus of their attention. Yet, as Slavoj Zizek (cited in Chow, 1998) argues, poststructuralism often assumes the position of mastery it seeks to deny: "[P]recisely because of this denial of metalanguage...the poststructural "subject" must also speak as if it is fully conscious of itself, of its "position," of its limits -- hence the endless self-referential digressions, qualifications, apologies, anticipations of criticisms, and so on" (p. 40).

being enabled" (p. 39), then the types of cognitive-analytical experiences L2 students have acquired warrant serious consideration as both a salient feature of identity formation and as a foundation with which to shape counterdiscursive practices in the ESL classroom. Such a view is also strongly supported by the "linguistic interdependence principle" (Cummins, 1996), in which sustained academic exposure in both L1 and L2 furthers a "common underlying proficiency" with significant advantages for the development of critical literacy skills.

Janks' work in *Critical Language Awareness* exemplifies this approach. For example, note what she says regarding the function of "agentless passives" in the representation of social rules as common sense or natural occurrences: "It goes without saying that students are not in a position to find or interpret agentless passives, unless they understand the structural forms of the passive voice. The critical approach provides students with a reason for mastering the forms" (Janks, 1991, p. 196). Consistent throughout her work, Janks uses categories for critical text analyses that are familiar to the ESL classroom and derived from Halliday's (1985) functional approach to grammar. Examples would be direct and reported speech (Janks, 1998), the article system (Janks, 1991), lexicalisation (Janks, 1997a), and choices of mood, modality, or polarity (Janks, 1997a). At the same time, Janks is sensitive to the critique leveled against systemic-functionalists and the tendency for some to employ form/function relationships reductively and normatively in the classroom. Drawing on Fairclough's (1989, 1995) three dimensional model of discourse, Janks (1997a) emphasizes that critical text analyses must always be

related dialectically to the processes of their social production and interpretation, and always within the larger societal and institutional discourses in which they circulate. Also of note, gender and race, and their discursive construction in the South African context where Janks lives and works, figure prominently in many of her analyses (see Janks, 1997a, 1997b, 1991). Most importantly, by making L2 students' metalinguistic experiences central to CLA, Janks's approach is especially responsive to their experiences of difference and power/knowledge relations.

It is not my intention here to suggest that all critical pedagogues become grammarians. But in the spirit of constructive dialogue, I do believe that poststructural-inspired educators can learn from and in fact advance their aspirations for social justice by way of engaging seriously with the experiences of pedagogical grammarians. As I have argued above, grammatical knowledge can have important benefits in regards to developing critical citizenship skills and language awareness -- perhaps not for all L2 students, but certainly for some. In terms of empowering L2 minority students and validating their learning experiences in the curriculum, these possibilities and contingencies warrant investigation.

Regarding identity formation, we might also seriously consider the degree to which classroom instruction in an L2 constitutes different ways of being and knowing in the world. In so doing, critical pedagogues might reflect on what Rey Chow (1998) observes is the current tendency amongst "the community of intellectuals, East and West," to be "complacent about our ability to criticize the racist and sexist blunders inherent in the stereotypical representations of

our cultural 'others'" (p. 74). Part of this complacency, as Giroux (1994) and Gore (1993) correctly suggest, could be redressed by dialogically engaging with pedagogy as a legitimate site of identity formation and knowledge production -- hence our understanding of "others". Chow (1998) also urges us to deconstruct "the ideological assumptions in discourses of 'resistance' and 'opposition' as well as in mainstream power" (p. 13). In our ESL classrooms, a dialogic engagement with Halliday's notion of social-semiotics might encourage us to explore "new" forms of subjectivity and non-discursive realities that have been previously underexamined within the prevailing assumptions of poststructural thought.

6.2.4 Conclusions: Pedagogical Grammar and Collaborative Relations of Power

To sum up this chapter, I should state that grammar is perceived by many ESL practitioners as the most abstract, decontextualized and rule-governed activity in second language teaching. It is always a challenge to find ways of making it interesting and relevant to a particular group of students. A useful reminder comes from Gregory Bateson (1972; Harries-Jones, 1996), who observed that "the map is not the territory." Choosing a particular grammatical "map", in this perspective, need not be subordinated to elusive notions of evidential truth or descriptive rigour. Instead the choice revolves around issues of explanatory value, as argued by Allen (1974), and the social interests and values such choices entail. Every instance of linguistic description and

consciousness-raising entails some element of arbitrariness. So fear of prescriptivism, to my mind, is a weak premise for ignoring issues of language, power and social justice during a pedagogical grammar lesson. When teachers and grammarians restrict themselves to mapping out only "what is", they deny the constitutive role that form plays in creating a "map" of "what might be", an essential component of active and critical citizenship. Building collaborative relations of power in our ESL classrooms (Cummins, 1996), in this perspective, means exploring the contingencies through which traditional domains and practices, such as pedagogical grammar, might become invigorated with emancipatory potential for our students.

CHAPTER 7

A DIALOGUE IN TWO DOMAINS, PART 2:

L2 VOCABULARY TEACHING

7.1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT MIGHT CRITICAL PRACTITIONERS LEARN FROM L2 VOCABULARY SPECIALISTS?

In this chapter, the pursuit of constructive dialogue and practical hybridity proceeds in a slightly different perspective from the preceding one. The domain in question, L2 vocabulary pedagogy, has already been discussed in some detail in the context of teaching the Quebec referendum in a program where students' L1, Chinese, had a considerable influence on how we took up the referendum in class. Bilingual dictionary use, L1 translation and analyses of key words, bottom-up or lexis-centred approaches, were all features of classroom treatment related to students' experiences and expectations of language learning. As well, in chapter five, I outlined the specific advantages that poststructural discourses might contribute to L2 vocabulary pedagogy, especially when issues of depth of vocabulary knowledge and critical citizenship practices are implicated. As I suggested, Derrida's notion of *différance*, provided an important perspective with which to conceptualize the contentious debate that took place over the terms and terminology used in the referendum.

This chapter begins by moving on from my blanket endorsement of poststructural principles as a way of conceptualizing words and enhancing critical citizenship. Now, I will change

perspectives somewhat and explore the following question: "What might poststructural-inspired educators gain from a constructive engagement with the discourses that shape contemporary L2 vocabulary research and pedagogy?" To proceed, I will need to draw close comparisons and contrasts between the ways in which both applied linguists and poststructuralists have analyzed the smaller elements of meaning-making -- words and their compositional elements -- from within their respective fields of expertise. In this pursuit, I will undertake a more detailed account of the notions of "motivation" and "arbitrariness" as they relate to how we think about words, their sources of meaning, and the types of instructional acts that can be built upon the conceptual foundations to which we might adhere. The analyses and comparisons I draw are consistent with the principles for a community-based ESL pedagogy outlined in chapter one. Specifically, for *transformative* practice to proceed, *reflective* practice must critically engage with the foundational assumptions and discourses that guide classroom work. Such critical reflection, I argue in this section, is no less pertinent for those who acknowledge and challenge the central role that formal education plays in reproducing social inequality and passive citizenship.

7.2 CONCEPTUALIZING WORDS/SIGNS IN POSTSTRUCTURALISM

In poststructuralism, the primary conceptualization of words has been through semiotics, the study of signs. Semiotics is a diverse field of often conflicting terminology and thought, running from the

ancient Greeks through philosophers such as John Locke, the structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce, and social semioticians such as Bakhtin, Volosinov, and Halliday (see Barthes, 1967; Cherry, 1978; Cherryholmes, 1988; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Norris, 1982; Scholes, 1985; Terdiman, 1985; Volosinov/ Bakhtin, 1973).

In poststructuralism, the centrality of Saussure's structuralist thought is elucidated by Weedon (1987): "All forms of poststructuralism assume that meaning is constituted within language and is not guaranteed by the subject which speaks it. In this sense all poststructuralism is post-Saussurean" (p. 22). Regarding semiotics, "An understanding of Saussure's theory of the 'sign' is fundamental to all poststructuralism. ... Poststructuralism, while building on Saussure's theory, radically modifies and transforms some of its important aspects." According to Weedon (1987), "It is in the work of Jacques Derrida that this critique of the Saussurean sign is made most clearly" (p. 25). In order to illustrate the conceptual borrowings and modifications involved, it is worth repeating the principles that underpin the Saussurean 'sign' and indicate their specific relevance to Derrida's theorization of *différance*.

The operation of a sign, according to Saussure, is enabled by the binding relationship between *signifier*, the material sound or graphic image, and *signified*, the concept to which it is assigned. This binding relationship occurs as an effect of pure differences from *within* a particular language system. As quoted below, Saussure describes language as a system of "differences without positive

terms." There is no intrinsic correspondence between the sound uttered to make the word *ox*, for example, and the animal that we identify by this name. In other languages, different signifiers would be used. As well, another language might have two signs, each denoting a more refined or specified meaning, in place of another language's singular and more generalized sign. For example, the sign *umbrella* in English often functions in current usage where two signs, *Regenschirm* (rain "protector") and *Sonnenschirm* (sun protector) function in German. According to Saussure, the "value" we accord a specific sign, can be called *arbitrary*.¹¹ Derrida acknowledges the centrality of this proposition for his notion of *différance* in the following quote he abstracts from Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*:

The conceptual side of value is made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the other terms of language, and the same can be said of its material side ... Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea of a phonic

¹¹ The appropriateness of the term *arbitrary* has been challenged by many (see Barthes, 1967; Scholes, 1985). Barthes points out that since no individual speaker of a language is free to modify this association, it "is by no means arbitrary ... indeed it is, on the contrary necessary. It was therefore suggested to say that in linguistics the signification is *unmotivated*" (Barthes, 1967, p. 50; emphasis in original). Barthes (1967) thus defines a semiotic system as arbitrary "when its signs are founded not by convention, but by unilateral decision: the sign is not arbitrary in the language but it is in fashion; and we shall say that a sign is *motivated* when the relation between its signified and signifier is analogical" (p. 51; emphasis mine). The issue of word motivation, as it is conceptualized in linguistics and morphology will be discussed in more detail later this chapter.

substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it. (Saussure, cited in Derrida, 1982, pp. 10-11; italics included)

What Derrida's theory of *différance* extrapolates from this quote is not just the lack of intrinsic presence (i.e. conceptual or phonic substance) that a word/sign might have outside a system of pure differentiation, but more crucially, a radical reformulation of the very concept of "system" itself -- perhaps "anti-system" would be more appropriate -- from which linguists and applied linguists derive their various statistical, relational, and hierarchical inventories of language items. The paradox here should be made explicit. For Derrida, Saussure's theory of the arbitrary and unmotivated sign establishes the *foundation* for his exuberant anti-foundationalism: "In a language, in the *system* of language, there are only differences ... on the one hand, these differences *play* in language ... On the other hand, these differences are themselves *effects*" (Derrida, 1982, p. 11; italics in original).

A foundational indeterminacy is the paramount value here. Language is anchorless in regard to the truth of its signficatory effect. There is neither a clear source of causality, nor non-social guarantor of meaning for the words we use. Through Derrida's notion of *différance*, "The effect of representation, in which meaning is apparantly fixed, is but a temporary retrospective fixing" (Weedon, 1987, p. 25). "Time always inserts itself into the substance of the semiotic. The truth about the sign then becomes its story: a narration of the unfolding of its meaning which can no longer be comprehended ... as a preexisting substance" (Terdiman, 1985, p. 33).

Thus, *différance* inscribes a permanent temporal and social dynamism within the neutrality of Saussure's binary form. This "play of differences" is radicalized even further by Derrida in his notion of *deconstruction*, whereby the meanings of texts -- not only books, but also events and experiences -- are read against themselves and other texts, revealing their inconsistencies, assumptions and "aporias" (i.e. self-generated paradoxes). Texts, by way of deconstruction, become much more and often much less than they appear to be (see Cherryholmes, 1988; Norris, 1982; Terdiman, 1985).

Much has been written about the limits and possibilities for deconstructive analyses. Does deconstruction open up or reduce the parameters for interpretive critique? On the positive side, Terdiman (1985) sees deconstruction as providing poststructuralism with "conceptual substance and coherence to that image of culture as a 'field of struggle'" (p. 33). Foucault, on the other, views "deconstruction as a mere rhetorical bag of tricks, a neat little 'pedagogy' secure in its knowledge that nothing exists outside the text" (Norris, p. 216). The apparent contradiction of these perspectives is also taken up by Edward Said (1985). To what extent can we say that texts are self-contained and wholly self-referential, *hermetic* in Said's (1985) terms, cut-off from the world of determination (historical, experiential) and thus open to an infinite number of reinterpretations? If we reject this proposition, upon what basis do we articulate the *worldliness* of texts (Said, 1985), the notion that a text has interpretive constraints, shaped by historical and situational contingencies, which exist "at the same level of surface particularity as the textual object itself" (p. 39)?

In education, as well, Derrida's deconstructive approach has been both credited with inspiring liberatory readings of curricular documents (see Cherryholmes, 1988) and villified for fostering a "radical reflexivity", a debilitating self-doubt which inhibits teachers from committing to specific practices and theories out of fear of unwittingly imposing yet another form of oppressive practice on their students (see Conostas, 1998; Mehan, 1995; Shea, 1998).

But let us return to the conceptual field of semiotics and critically assess the theorization of words/signs that gives deconstruction its analytical force. The foundational status of Saussure's theory of the 'sign' for both poststructuralism and Derrida's notion of *différance* have already been noted above. An interesting question arises when we return to the point raised at the beginning of this chapter. Given the historical and contemporary diversity of semiotic thought, to what extent has the preeminence accorded the "arbitrary" Saussurean 'sign' in structuralism served to predispose its indeterminacy in the "post-Saussurean" sign/word articulated by Derrida.

First, as Scholes (1985) suggests, the endless "play of differences" or "unlimited semiosis" that characterizes Derrida's notion of *différance* is as much indebted to C. S. Peirce as it is to Saussure. Along with his pioneering work in semiotics, Peirce is identified as a leading American figure in the philosophy of pragmatism. His pragmatic orientation is reflected in his formulation of the "essentially triadic nature of every sign situation (sign-designatum-user). A sign cannot be said simply to signify something [Cf. Saussure; see Cherryholmes, 1988, pp. 19-20; Scholes, 1985, p.

92; Barthes, 1967] but only to signify something to somebody" (Cherry, 1978, p. 267). The meanings and responses that a user "receives" are based on several factors such as past experiences, inherited or innate qualities, and the specific social context in which the sign appears. Most importantly (Cf. Derrida), Peirce theorized that every user's response, in turn, had the capacity of acting as a "new" sign with the same triadic relationship to the original object designated (Cherry, 1978, p. 267). Hence, a potentially unlimited variety of possible "interpretants" (Peirce's own term), and in Derrida's hands, the continuous deferral and temporization of meaning within and throughout a language (see Scholes, 1985, pp. 90-91). The result is "differences" as both the cause and effect of other differences. As discussed earlier, Derrida's concept can be a powerful metaphor and teaching tool when taking up the social meanings and consequences of words such as *sovereignty* in the context of the Quebec referendum and critical citizenship issues.

Interestingly, Derrida's (1982) discussion of *différance* makes no explicit reference to Peirce, though Scholes (1985) argues that the inspiration from Peirce's "interpretant" is unmistakable. But maybe Derrida's "oversight" is not unintended, based as it might be on the theoretical difficulties and aporias that explicit reference to Peirce would generate in his own work. As Hodge and Kress indicate (1988, p. 20), Peirce's notion of the "interpretant" is not clearly argued. And though his concept might emphasize that signification is invariably a *process* involving social agency (contrary to Saussure's synchronic focus), it does place clear referential and existential brakes on the

infinite mobility of deferment and deferral so central to the notion of *différance*.

Thus, one might argue that for strategic reasons, Derrida is somewhat selective in according Saussure's arbitrary/unmotivated sign exclusive attention and originary status in the principles that underpin *différance*.¹² If he were to have embraced Peirce's typology of signs in his theory, for example, the deconstructive enterprise would need to come to terms with a much wider array of signifying activities, some of which most surely would undermine the rhetorical force that obtains from the pure, systemic arbitrariness formulated by Saussure. For example, in Peirce's typology only one form of sign, a *symbol* (Barthes, 1967; Hodge & Kress, 1988, pp. 21-22) could be called unmotivated or arbitrary in the way we associate this idea with Saussure's work. In addition to *symbols*, Peirce's other major types include *icons*, based on a resemblance between sign and referent (e.g. road signs), and *indices* (or indexical signs), based upon "cause-effect chains (e.g. smoke-fire) or contiguity linkages (e.g. an arm for a person)" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 27).

Peirce's expanded typology of signs compels us to think of words as having many sources combining both motivated and unmotivated elements. The form and composition of words/signs can, at times, have an ahistorical "materiality" -- a phonic and imageable substance -- that serves as a kind of communication channel in terms of determining the types of information that are conveyed. Barthes

¹² The tactical or pragmatic orientation of *différance* is stated by Derrida (1982) himself: "In the delineation of *différance*, everything is strategic and adventurous ... a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics" (p. 7).

(1967) provides a good discussion of the issues involved. Signifiers in the Saussurean model can be described as discrete or digital codes, based as they are on the principle of pure differentiation within a single language system. Yet other signifiers, especially as they comprise icons and indices, can be depicted as more or less analogous to the meanings/objects to which they refer. Indeed, an iconic sign is characteristic of a stronger perceptual resemblance (or analogy) between sign and referent/meaning than an indexical one, which relies more on inferencing and judgement from sign users (see Hodge & Kress, 1988, pp. 26-27). Any semiological inventory, according to Barthes (1967), "will reveal the existence of *impure systems*, comprising either very loose motivations, or motivations pervaded, so to speak, with secondary non-motivations, as if, often, the sign lent itself to a kind of conflict between the motivated and the unmotivated" (emphasis mine, p. 52). Barthes goes on to provide an example of onomatopoeia, where the sound "ouch" appears to be directly "motivated" by the pain one experiences. But in French, the sound (aie), and in Danish, the sound (au), used to express pain, reflect different phonological models intrinsic to these respective languages. Hence, the *universal* (the expression of human pain) and the *particular* (sound subordinated to a specific system of phonological rules) -- both analogic and digital codes -- interact and/or conflict, in the sense of "impure" linguistic systems noted by Barthes.

In spite of the stature and importance of Saussure's work, we should recognize that the "value" of words/linguistic signs are not solely reducible to an abstract, differentiating linguistic system

"without positive terms". Peirce's more elaborated typology of signs draws our attention to a richer aggregation of signifying elements -- both intrinsic and extrinsic to a "pure" language system -- that comprise word formation and influence meaning. To embrace the kinds of diverse semiotic principles that Peirce identifies would mean to examine "word motivation" not simply in terms of presence or absence but rather by degree and combination, where historical and discursive elements articulate with social, cognitive, and linguistic factors (i.e. "pure differences", Cf. Saussure) to influence how words and meanings are generated, perceived, and possibly transformed.

It should also be reiterated that Saussure believed that a systematic study of language required *synchronic* (i.e. frozen in time) analyses of *langue* (the abstract rules underlying a homogeneous language system). As a result, words/signs were conceptualized and accorded value by way of how they related to the abstract system rather than in their specific moments of use by individual speakers (i.e. *parole*). In the interests of theoretical neatness, Saussure's analytical approach glosses over the constitutive variables that social semioticians such as Volosinov, Bakhtin, and Halliday see as fundamental to the operation of signs/words: the specific moment and social context in which an *utterance* (Cf. Volosinov/ Bakhtin, 1973) circulates, the intersubjective relations and differentiations of power between speakers, and their prior experiences of signs from which to interpret "new" semiotic activity as it unfolds. Signs are

dialogical and "multiaccentual", according to Volosinov/Bakhtin¹³ (1973, p. 23), their dynamism indicating the fact that each new utterance reflects the (re)convergence of conflicting interests, contexts, and ideologies. To avoid the social contingencies of an utterance (and of *parole*), in the perspective of social semiotics, is to devalue the primary substance and ideological functioning of signs and signifying activity (see Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Janks, 1997a, 1997b, 1998; Kress & Hodge, 1988; Volosinov/Bakhtin, 1973).

It is worth noting that the contingent (i.e. utterances) and politicized (i.e. multiaccentual) sign of Volosinov/Bakhtin bears close resemblance to Peirce's referential concepts, especially in regards to the triadic nature of the sign through an "interpretant". However, a crucial distinction relevant to a comparative analysis of signs/words should be stated. As I mentioned above, Peirce's semiotic typology clearly establishes different *forms* of signs and carrying capacities related to the phonic and imageable substance (i.e. materiality) of these forms. In Volosinov/Bakhtin (1973), the materiality of signs/words is ambiguous and often contradictory. For example, Volosinov/Bakhtin (1973) states that "an ideological sign has some kind of material embodiment, whether in sound, physical mass, color, movements of the body, or the like" (p. 11). Although this sense of intrinsic and ahistorical materiality is hinted at several times in chapter one, it is never specified in ways that would reveal particular communicative capacities of word forms or semiotic

¹³ It is believed that for political reasons, many of Bakhtin's books were published under the names of colleagues. The authorship of the source I am citing, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, is attributed to Volosinov. Throughout, I have added Bakhtin's name to reflect his assumed authorship of this text (Terdiman, 1985, pp. 35-36).

principles as they have been articulated by Peirce. By chapter two, the material embodiment of the sign -- its "inner dialectic" -- is equated exclusively and determined entirely by *external*, ideological forces and class struggle, rather than formal word/sign properties (see Volosinov/Bakhtin, 1973, pp. 22-24). Of course, the underlying reason for these "inconsistencies" might be attributed to the real physical dangers that would result from even the most minor deviations outside Marxist historical-materialism at the time this text was written (first published in 1929) during Stalin's repressive Soviet Union.

In summing up this section, we might reflect on Hodge and Kress's (1988) argument that Saussure's semiotic theory "has proved a very influential and damaging overstatement" (p. 21). As I have indicated here, its influence is marked by the foundational status accorded Saussure's semiotics by both structuralists and poststructuralists alike (see Cherryholmes, 1988; Weedon, 1989). In terms of "damaging overstatement", Hodge and Kress alert us to the restricted view of language that obtains if we, as critical educators, take Saussure's theory of the sign to be the exclusive or primary source of semiotic theory regarding the source(s) of word meanings. As I will argue below, such a limited view of signs/words might actually work at cross-purposes for those who want to look at issues of language, power and critical citizenship in the ESL classroom. In the spirit of theoretical and practical hybridity, I will suggest several areas of expertise, developed by applied linguists and L2 vocabulary specialists, which might further the emancipatory goals that critical and postmodern educators hope to advance. I will then describe a L2

vocabulary activity in which a teacher's developing awareness of word motivation and morphology served to increase critical language awareness.

7.2.1 Word Motivation and Morphology in Descriptive and Psycholinguistics

Iconic and indexical signs, as discussed in the previous section, are forms of "analogic" signification whose meanings and substance cannot be reduced to the larger system of differences from which they obtain. Such signs are said to be "motivated", their appearance, composition and phonic or graphic substance suggesting which elements of the world they refer to, what other linguistic signs they relate to, and how they might be used in communication. A productive, working definition for "word motivation", as it relates to descriptive and psycholinguistics, comes from David Corson (1995): "the degree to which words 'speak' their meanings to people meeting them for the first time" (pp. 33-34). Words can "speak their meanings" in several ways. Descriptive linguists have pursued this issue through the study of morphology, the examination and combination of morphemes, which are the smallest meaningful units of words (see Corson, 1985; Crystal, 1987; De Guzman & O'Grady, 1987). The study of word structure, through morphology, generates a system of categories far more elaborate than the compositionality of signs (i.e. signifier/signified) characteristic of (post)structuralism.

Fundamental contrasts define morphological structure. For example, *free* morphemes, which can constitute words alone (e.g.

house) are distinguished from *bound* morphemes, such as the plural form *-s*, which must be attached to other elements in word formation (De Guzman & O'Grady, 1987, p. 130). As well, a contrast is made between *roots*, "the major component of a word's meaning," and *affixes* (i.e. prefixes and suffixes in English; infixes in other languages such as Tagalog), "bound morphemes which typically modify the meaning or syntactical category in some way" (De Guzman & O'Grady, 1987, pp. 131-132). Another important distinction is formulated around *inflectional* morphology, the reconstitution of roots and affixes to express grammatical changes, and the study of *derivational* morphology, the principles involved in making a new word "by changing the category and/or the stem to which it applies" (De Guzman & O'Grady, 1987, pp. 134; Crystal, 1987, p. 90).

Related to morphological structure is the issue of how knowledge of words is organized and processed in the mind, comprising what is called the *mental lexicon* (see Corson, 1995; Schreuder & Weltens, 1993; Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994). The types of questions that direct psycholinguistic research on the mental lexicon are as follows: Are words stored as whole entries, or are only the base forms or stems stored (Cf. "impoverished entry" and "full entry" theories of the mental lexicon; Corson, 1995, p. 32; Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994, p. 394)? To what extent do lexical entries store information regarding orthographic and phonological structure as well as syntactic and semantic properties (Corson, 1995; Schreuder & Veltens, 1993, p. 5)? Are words just the "epiphenomena" of the mental lexicon, which is made up of an inventory of morphemes, allowing language users to understand and produce an infinitive

number of new words in a manner that parallels Chomsky's theories on syntax, deep structure, and competency versus performance (see Sandra, 1994, p. 230)? If morphemes are entered in the mental lexicon, how is this inventory organized? A *morpheme listing* view suggests that "only stems (for affixed words) or first constituent morphemes for compound words are represented in the mental lexicon as lexical entries" whereas a *morpheme network* view suggests that all morphemes, whether roots or affixes, have individual entries connected with each other (Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994, pp. 394-395).

An important example of a "network" view would be the *interactive-activation* model as discussed and modified by Corson (1995). In this model, morphologically complex words have both whole-word entries and several overlapping or network-forming entries comprised of their stems, affixes, and graphemes, whose activation is determined by the strength of the particular cues or input factors that a target word generates (Corson, 1995, pp. 156-157). Most importantly, Corson argues that the functioning of such a morphological network (or of a "mental lexicon", for that matter) cannot be assessed outside of a person's specific life experiences of language learning and language awareness, which he proposes to be "key variable factors that produce individual and group differences in processing words in the brain" (Corson, 1995, p. 155). As Corson (1995) notes, this discursive dimension, as it pertains to the interaction of cognition with subjectivity and power, has been largely neglected by psycholinguists, who have been primarily concerned with discovering the invariant properties of language and mind:

They work from the belief that human mental processes are much the same for everyone and that the way to understand these invariant processes is by experimentation and induction. But... the very important evidence that psycholinguists have turned up about morphology and the mental lexicon, now tends to argue against the basic belief that they operate from. Instead the evidence strongly suggests that... the arrangement of the mental lexicon is highly idiosyncratic. In other words, that arrangement depends on the lexico-semantic positioning and the language experience that any given individual receives as a result of the discursive relations in which he or she is placed. (Corson, 1995, pp. 152-153)

Corson's observations are important for the purposes of conducting a constructive dialogue between poststructuralists and applied linguists. Given the positivist orientation that has framed most morphological studies, those working outside this disciplinary field might be inclined to dismiss outright the research emanating from psycholinguistic research. Yet as Corson notes, the outcomes of this research have actually run contrary to the disciplinary objectives that were originally set. While psycholinguists cannot claim to know the "ultimate truth" about the operation of the mental lexicon, they can tell us many valuable things about the complexities of words as a direct result of their efforts. By not engaging seriously with such studies, critical practitioners lose the opportunity of applying this enriched understanding of words in the pursuit of social justice issues.

In this perspective, Corson's (1995) own work on the *lexical bar* in English exemplifies the kind of theoretical dialogue and multidisciplinary approach called for by Dunn and Lantolf (1998).

Corson's study synthesizes a broad spectrum of empirical and qualitative research in literacy, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, philosophy, sociology of language and education, ESL, anthropology, and critical theory. From a historical and discursive perspective, Corson provides a genealogical background on the unique position of Greco-Latin (GL) based words in English and their disproportionate influence and high status in elite professions and academic disciplines. Given the degree to which command of GL words confers status and power in our society, Corson takes up the particular linguistic properties of GL words and the particular implications for acquiring this knowledge through home and school discourses marked by sociocultural differences and inequalities.

7.2.2 Word Motivation and L2 Vocabulary Pedagogy

Although the picture of words that morphological studies offer might seem overly abstract for teaching purposes, many L2 vocabulary specialists recognize the benefits for vocabulary acquisition when teachers develop language awareness of the intrinsic or motivated aspects of words (see Ellis, 1994; Carter, 1987; Carter & McCarthy, 1988; McCarthy & O'Dell, 1997) This does not suggest that we focus exclusively on form, but that we recognize and examine the ways in which intrinsic properties and cognitive factors interact with social, experiential and discursive ones (see Cummins, 1998a, 1998b, 1999). Ellis (1985), for one, argues persuasively for the importance of meaningful oral input -- a focus on language in use (Cummins, 1998b) -- in developing depth of knowledge in L2

vocabulary. At the same time, he outlines five intrinsic word properties which interact with contextual and interpersonal factors to influence L2 word acquisition: 1) part of speech 2) distinctiveness of word form 3) length of word form 4) degree of correlation between form and meaning 5) imageability.

Regarding "parts of speech", Ellis (1994, p. 8) suggests, for instance, that nouns are more easily acquired than verbs -- a point related to inflection, derivation, and the principles of *compositionality and transparency*.¹⁴ The aspect of "distinctiveness" suggests that words whose forms are "distinct" are easier to learn than words whose graphic or sound image too closely approximate words familiar to the learner. "Length of word form" indicates that L2 learners find monosyllabic words easier to remember and decode than polysyllabic words. "Correlation between form and meaning" suggests that learners initially remember words based on their sound rather than their meaning. Finally, "imageability" is a concept that looks at the relative ease in remembering words based on the degree of referential abstractness or concreteness they have. Words that conjure up an image in the mind, such as *dog* or *cup*, for instance, are much easier to learn than abstract words such as *love* and *cruelty* (Ellis, 1994, pp. 8-9).

For classroom purposes, many of the intrinsic features defined by Ellis and Corson above have been incorporated in the organization

¹⁴ "Semantic 'compositionality' suggests that the meaning of the whole is predictable from the sum of its parts" (Bauer, cited in Corson, 1995, p. 33). Structural or semantic 'transparency' is a related idea, where the order or combination of morphemes enhances prediction of meaning (Corson, 1995, p. 33). "'Productivity' refers to the frequency of use of the same morphemes in the words of a language" (ibid.).

of L2 vocabulary textbooks. Keen's (1985) text, *Developing Vocabulary Skills*, is one of the most pronounced efforts at making principles of inflectional and derivational morphology central to pedagogical design. Chapters are organized around the semantic properties of specific roots, prefixes and suffixes. Based on principles of word motivation, Keen has students determine the meanings of words based on their morphemic "compositionality". As well, words with similar roots and/or affixes are placed in reading stories that help contextualize their meanings.

One anecdote is worth recalling. I happened to find and purchase Keen's book at a university library sale six years ago. According to the librarian, the book was "too analytical", focussed as it was on the form and composition of words, and at a time when strong forms of communicative language teaching enjoyed an almost unchallenged theoretical hegemony in ESL. While I would not disagree with the librarian's "analytical" assessment of Keen's book, I would not relegate it to the delete bin based on the same. Some of my students have and continue to find Keen's analytical approach conducive to their expectations and experiences of vocabulary learning. Certainly, it is a book that needs to be balanced with more oral, communicative, and inferencing type of activities. But it is a unique and commendable effort towards helping students develop language awareness in the areas of GL compositionality described by Corson.

More recently, McCarthy and O'Dell (1997) have included an entire chapter of units on principles of word formation and motivation in their students' text, *Vocabulary in use*. There are units

on suffixes, prefixes and roots, which analyze the inflectional and derivational functions of these morphemes and provide suggestions for students encountering them for the first time. A unit on "abstract nouns" provides a list of suffixes that are frequently used to provide this semantic quality (e.g. -ment, in achievement; -ion, in illusion; -ness, in bitterness; -ity, in curiosity; -ship, in relationship; etc.). Other units in this chapter examine word compounding (i.e. morphological motivation), onomatopoeia (i.e. phonetic motivation), word origins (i.e. etymology), and homonyms. This chapter's comprehensive attention to word formation is a wonderful complement to other chapters organized around various semantic fields (e.g. topics, notional concepts, feelings and actions, idioms) and syntactical categories (e.g. phrasal verbs and verb-based expressions).

The kinds of acquisitional supports or "scaffolding" that attention to word form offers students is a central principle of Cummins' *e-Lective Language Learning* system (Cummins, 1998a). Through multimedia, CD-ROM based delivery, authentic reading materials in English (or potentially any other L2) are supported by a wide range of hypertext options that provide explicit knowledge of word formation and word depth. In the course of reading a text, a student would be able to access the following vocabulary information: "a dictionary definition in English, an L1 translation equivalent, the English pronunciation of the word, grammatical information related to the word or phrase (e.g. verb tenses), idiomatic or useful expressions, English and L1 cognate information, where cognates exist" (Cummins, 1998a, p. 19).

The possibilities that the *e-Lective* system, and future Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) developments, provide for self-directed learning are great. In the context of this section, one can imagine the possibilities of expanding word information to include the kinds of intrinsic and compositional aspects of vocabulary that authors such as Corson, Ellis, McCarthy and O'Dell have detailed. Conceivably, hypertext might include information on areas of contrastive word formation, for instance, providing explicit cues on word motivation for students whose L1 is morphologically similar to English (e.g. Spanish) and for students' whose L1 is not (e.g. Chinese, Finnish, and Turkish). As Cummins indicates, and as I will discuss below, such contrastive awareness has significant implications not only in terms of comprehending text and developing depth of L2 vocabulary knowledge but also in terms of expanding critical literacy skills in a self-directed way. As we increase comprehension of a passage, through the word supports built into the system, we also reflect back upon the "new" words that have enabled our understanding by relating them to personal experiences and prior knowledge. This recursive process potentially increases our willingness to analyze and experiment with words, understand their social significance and status (Cf. Corson's lexical bar studies, 1995), which heightens our awareness of how the seeming naturalness of words (such as sovereignty) and their intrinsic properties are used partisanly to position social subjects and minority communities. Based on such knowledge, our strategic ability to transgress, modify, or uphold the existing political order is enhanced.

7.3 IN THE CLASSROOM: WORD FORMATION AND CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS

In summing up this discussion so far, I should be careful not to overestimate the exclusive contribution of applied and psycholinguistic studies of word formation in the area of critical language awareness. Such close attention to word form can enrich practice, but is severely constrained if not combined with the kinds of interactional, sociocultural, and discursive contingencies identified by Cummins (1996, 1998a, 1998b) and Corson (1995). My purposes for introducing these aspects of word analysis into my thesis has been to compare the foundational differences between a poststructural understanding of vocabulary and the concerns that have preoccupied researchers and practitioners in applied linguistics.

In poststructuralism, the sources of meaning and material content of words have been largely appraised through Saussurean semiotics, a system of pure differences, comprised of arbitrary or unmotivated signs. To be fair, this somewhat limited perspective on word formation has been largely a result of rhetorical considerations, especially in the work of Derrida. Words/signs are positioned as the departure point, rather than the substance, for a larger deconstructive, political project characterized by Lyotard's defining statement of postmodernism as "an incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard cited in Shea, 1998, p. 339). Psycholinguistic research on words -- and positivist orientations in general -- suffers from the opposite problem: a preoccupation with

discovering the "metanarratives" of mind and language while ignoring discursive factors, and/or incommensurabilities in the analyses of different ways of processing words.

Corson's work indicates that there are many ways that "words 'speak' their meanings to people meeting them for the first time" (Corson, 1995, pp. 33-34). As critical educators, the more carefully we examine this proposition the better we are able to understand the contingencies through which power relations articulate to semiotic systems comprised of "either very loose motivations, or motivations pervaded, so to speak, with secondary non-motivations, as if, often, the sign lent itself to a kind of conflict between the motivated and the unmotivated" (Barthes, 1967, p. 52). Word motivation should not be seen as a "one size fits all" proposition, as many psycholinguists might assume. Notions of semantic transparency or opaqueness, for example, *are* influenced by the particular learning experiences of language users in addition to morphological principles or aspects of imageability (Ellis, 1994) that words might contain.

The following section begins with a discussion of Chinese word formation and how it might contribute to and/or inhibit critical language awareness in ESL. Following this discussion, I will describe what I believe to have been a particularly successful language lesson on critical vocabulary awareness. One of the key factors that contributed to this classroom treatment was my evolving interest in Chinese morphology as it relates to my students language awareness in English.

7.3.1 Word Motivation and CLA for L1 Chinese-Speaking Students

My first tentative inquiries into areas of Chinese morphology and CLA occurred not long after my return from teaching in Sichuan province and as a result of a course I was taking at OISE called *Language Power and Possibility*, with Prof. Roger Simon. The critical and analytical interests that the course readings stirred focussed my attention on two news items that came out of China in the year following the Tienanmen massacre in Beijing. The first report was about "rebellious" students in a Beijing university repeatedly smashing small bottles against the ground (see Pennycook, 1996b, p. 221). This was not just an isolated case of reckless vandalism but a calculated, political statement that all Chinese speakers knew intuitively. The Chinese word for "little bottle" is *xiao ping(zi)* (pronounced as "sheow-ping"). However, the same two syllables (defined as CVVV [consonant-vowel-vowel-vowel] and CVC [consonant-vowel-consonant]), with different phonemic, suprasegmental tones attached to them acquire a strong homophonic reference to the given names of China's paramount leader at the time, Deng Xiao Ping. It was clearly hoped for, during this incident, that the smashing of little bottles portended the breaking up of a far more resilient power, which wasn't to be the case. The second incident involved the "inadvertent" publication in China of a palindrome critical of the Chinese government. Composed in matrices, palindromes are multidirectional rhyming poems (Elvin, 1991, p. 59). As reported in the Western press, this political tract was so skillfully

"hidden" within the poem's structure that even the usually diligent censors were unable to notice it.

In these examples, we see evidence of how aspects of L1 word motivation and formation intersect with specific historical, sociocultural and political factors to produce unique critical language activities. In both cases, the specific morphological features of Chinese contributed substantially, but not exclusively, to the particular expressions of critical citizenship that took place.

In contrast to Indo-European languages, Chinese has limited use of derivation and inflection for producing new words and/or grammatical variants (Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994, pp. 395-396; Newnham, 1971, Ch. 4). Compounding is the most common way of producing new words in Chinese. Disyllabic compounds (two syllables combined) form the vast majority of words in Chinese, followed by monomorphemic words, which are repeatedly re-used as constituent morphemes in compounds, given that the language has only about 6000 morphemes (Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994, pp. 395-396). Disyllabic compound words can be semantically motivated by their constituents, as would be the case with words such as "independence" (*du li*, second tone, fourth tone; 'alone' and 'stand', respectively; literally interpreted as "standing alone") and "sovereignty" (*zhu quan*, third tone, second tone; 'governing' and 'power', respectively) (Oxford University Press, Concise English-Chinese/Chinese-English Dictionary, 1986; Donald Qi, email correspondence). Often, though, the relationship between constituents is based on functional rather than transparent, semantic properties, reflecting the expanding need to produce new words and

the scarcity of existing morphemes. Thus, one of several language reforms -- the most important would arguably be character simplification -- that has been accelerated in mainland China has been in the area of creating more formal derivatives with which to increase the possibility for compounding (Newnham, 1971, p. 68).

There are very few "bound" morphemes in the combinatory or synthetic sense we use this term for Indo-European languages (e.g. Chinese has inflectional morphemes for possessive and plural pronouns). Whereas a morpheme in English can be easily categorized by its grammatical and phonological functions (e.g. the bound morpheme/suffix *-ity* generates nouns and syllable stress on the syllable prior to the suffix) a number of Chinese morphemes traverse morphological categories, functioning on the one hand as monomorphemic words (though this aspect of use might be rare for a specific morpheme) and on the other as derivational or inflectional morphemes that anchor or suggest how the main constituent morpheme in disyllabic compounds should be understood. An example of this "loose" binding, and one related to the smashing of bottles, would be the noun suffix *zi* (third tone in Mandarin) which alone means 'son', but as a constituent morpheme removes the homophonic ambiguity of the lexical morpheme to which it is attached (see Newnham, 1971, pp. 65-66).

With the addition of suprasegmental, phonemic tones, Chinese makes productive use of a relatively limited number of syllables -- around 1300 in Mandarin Chinese -- whose segmental arrangements usually follow the patterns of CVC, CVVC or CVVV (Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994, pp. 395-396). Usually, each syllable generates four

morphemes which correspond to the four phonemic tones used in Mandarin Chinese. These tones are usually named the "'high' ('first') tone, the 'high-rising' ('second'), the 'falling-and-rising' ('third'), and the 'falling' ('fourth') tone" (Newnham, 1971, p. 21). In extreme cases, 40 or 50 morphemes can be formed from a single syllable. A key feature, thus, is the prevalence of homophonic morphemes and the inherent ambiguity they provide -- intentionally or otherwise -- in spoken form, since orthographic representation is far less ambiguous based on the one-to-one correspondence between a character and the morpheme it represents (Zhou & Marslen-Wilson, 1994, p. 396).

Not surprisingly, Meara (cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 9), notes that Chinese students find English polysyllabic words more difficult to remember than monosyllabic ones. An interesting point to reflect on in this regard would be the L2 decompositional strategies that Chinese speakers employ based on the morphological principles outlined above. Quite possibly, an L1 Chinese speaker might try to analyze and process each morpheme in terms of its duality as both a monomorphemic word and a compound constituent -- an exponentially complicating approach for polysyllabic words. Another contributing factor to this possibility would be the salient point made by Zhou and Marslen-Wilson (1994) regarding the fact that "each morpheme in the written form corresponds to a character which represents directly the meaning of the morpheme, and which, perceptually, has clear boundaries with adjacent characters" (p. 397). This perceptual independence, along with the potential (un)boundness of almost every morpheme, adds an interesting dimension to the discussion in chapter four on Chinese students

"bottom-up" or "lexis-centred" approaches to L2 acquisition. While I would not detract from the view that literacy demands (i.e. the memorization of thousands of characters) in Chinese have had an immense influence on L2 strategies, the morphological features noted above would also help explain the preference for strategies focussed on individual words (i.e. increased dictionary use, building comprehensive word lists with L1 translations) in the process of learning English.

If we return to the two public incidents noted above, the smashing of bottles and the palindrome, we can see that both events were enabled and constrained by the unique morphological features of Chinese. The prevalence of homophonic morphemes in Chinese -- related to monomorphemic words, the limited number of syllables and the application of suprasegmental tones -- increases the possibilities for the "productive ambiguities" that constituted the political act of smashing bottles. But in the multidisciplinary approach to vocabulary advocated by Corson (1995) and Cummins (1998b), other contributing factors are equally important to consider. That this event happened in the weeks leading up to the June 4th, 1989, massacre in Tienanmen Square was crucial to its unfolding. Students were emboldened by the moment (and perhaps exposure to an approving international audience) and the possibilities of transforming their society (see Simmie & Nixon, 1989). And in this activity, some students might have also been motivated by historical memory and a sense of responsibility, originating with the May Fourth movement of 1919, a movement originating with student protests and one directed at a critical reappraisal of Chinese

traditions as they compared to the social, political and scientific achievements and values of the Western powers (whose meetings at the Paris Peace conference at the time included discussions to partition parts of China for themselves)(Schwarcz, 1991).

Another important, discursive factor should be mentioned. As Pennycook (1996b) speculates, the tradition of performing public acts according to homophonic reference has links going back to the Confucian doctrine of *cheng ming*, where "things are conceived of as conforming to the natural order not in themselves but in virtue of corresponding to their names" (Harris, cited in Pennycook, 1996b, p. 221). This unique interrelationship, where one acts upon reality based upon the ideals inscribed within language, corresponds to what Confucius called the "rectification of names". According to Fung Yu-Lan (1948), this Confucian principle states that "things in actual fact should be made to accord with the implication attached to them by names.... [E]very name contains certain implications which constitute the essence of that class of things to which this name applies. Such things, therefore, should agree with this ideal essence" (p. 41). This is not to say that Confucian doctrines still determine Chinese society, but rather to point out the complex interrelated types of determining factors (e.g. historical, cultural, philosophical, political, and linguistic) that shape conformity to and transgression of power relations within a particular language.

Looking at the publication of the palindrome, we also see the enabling features of critical discourse as a result of the largely monosyllabic and uninflected nature of Chinese. Given the perceptual autonomy of each character, and its potential duality as either a

monosyllabic word or as a functional or semantic constituent in a compound word, the possibilities for inscribing a political tract "between the lines" of a multidirectional palindrome are greatly enhanced.

One might assume, from these two examples, that Chinese students are advantageously positioned in terms of critical language awareness. In some incidents, this would be true. As I argued in chapter four, students' strategies of translating, decomposing, and analyzing the key words of the Quebec referendum helped them view ambiguity in word meaning as an intention of language users, rather than a product of their inadequacies as L2 learners. But in this activity, other "problems" related to L1 word formation and motivation are worth revisiting. From their L1 dictionaries students discussed two translations of the word 'sovereignty', the more common *zhu chuan* (literally 'governing' and 'power'), and the less common *tong zhi quan* ('complete', 'govern', 'right'). When students decomposed the latter, the last two constituents, forming the disyllabic word *zhi quan*, formed an antonymic relationship to the trisyllabic word, which connoted the authority vested in a higher authority.

As noted earlier, the compositional/semantic parallels with *sovereign/sovereignty* are quite interesting, and I tried to utilize these L1/L2 parallels when trying to explain the controversy around the referendum question. While both English words share a similar base form (sovereign), the addition of the bound suffix *-ty* to form the abstract noun can be seen as potentially antonymous to the unaffixed form which can denote the noun (person) form. And when

related to certain historical and national contexts, this duality can be astutely exploited for political purposes. 'Sovereign', the noun (person), has the potential of intertextual associations with Canadian politics, connoting the existence of a nominal monarch, whose continued symbolic presence, however miniscule, in a "sovereign" Quebec might still be desirable for some "yes" voters in a referendum. At the same time, through the derivational process of *conversion* (De Guzman & O'Grady, 1987, pp. 140-141), the same surface form becomes a new word simply by assigning it a different syntactical category without affixation. Thus 'sovereign' can function as an adjective semantically related to the abstract noun 'sovereignty'. Of note, this surface form (with its ambiguity enhanced by its post-nominal positioning in the referendum question: "Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign...") was used in the referendum question and criticized by federal politicians such as Lucienne Robillard, who objected that there was no reference to the word 'country' after 'sovereign' (Stewart, 1995).

For Chinese L1 speakers, the L2 subtleties and complexities involved are further complicated by the fact that their language makes little use of derivation and inflection in word formation. With L1 words such as *zhu quan* and *tong zhi quan*, semantic motivation (complementary and antonymous) from each constituent is clearly demarcated and relatively independent of syntactical factors. To reiterate the point made by Zhou and Marslen-Wilson (1994), "each morpheme in the written form corresponds to a character which represents directly the meaning of the morpheme, and which, perceptually, has clear boundaries with adjacent characters" (p. 397).

In the L2 context, however, bound morphemes, derivations, and syntactical factors (e.g. the postnominal adjective 'sovereign') are not so clearly delimited; yet they can play a major role in terms of constructing preferred readings and idealized readers or subject positions, or conversely, masking the types of oppositional readings that might be made around a particular text. Accordingly, when analyzing texts and vocabulary in L2, L1 Chinese speakers would benefit from explicit attention to principles of English derivation and inflection in the context of developing Critical Language Awareness.

The following activity describes a critical vocabulary activity in which explicit attention to criteria of word depth and form (including derivation and inflection) were developed through engagement with critical social issues directly relevant to the experiences of my students.

7.3.2 In the Classroom: NATO's Bombing of the Chinese Embassy

On May 11, 1999, I walked into my classroom amidst a loud discussion taking place in Cantonese. I was curious and asked what everybody was so excited about. One of my students bluntly asked, "Why did the Americans attack the Chinese embassy in Belgrade?" The first thing I said was that it wasn't just the Americans; Canada was also part of NATO, and the war against Serbia was a NATO operation. Another student asked me what the word NATO meant, so I wrote out the words for the acronym on the board and briefly

mentioned who its members were and the historical beginnings of the organization.

What really surprised me the most was that there was almost unanimous agreement that the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and resulting deaths of three Chinese journalists caught in the building, had been a calculated act. This possibility was simply something I had not even imagined. My first assumption was that it was a tragic accident caused by military and intelligence incompetence. So, I was quite curious to find out why my students felt this way and, through their answers, get a better understanding of the intense anti-American demonstrations taking place in Beijing at the time. I organized the class into small groups and asked for and wrote a set of impromptu questions that reflected the initial comments and informal discussion that occurred at the beginning of the class.

(on the board)

- 1) Should the Chinese remain silent or accept an apology from the USA.?
- 2) Does the attack have any relationship to the history of Asia (Japan, Korea, Taiwan)?
- 3) What can the Americans do to reduce the anger of China?
- 4) Was this an accident or on purpose? Why?

Several thought-provoking exchanges took place, especially over questions two and four. To explain why the bombing was intentional, a student from Taiwan said that US technology is

"perfect". An older student from Vietnam disagreed, pointing out that during the Vietnam war she had heard that sometimes the Americans had bombed themselves by accident. Several students felt that the event was linked to China's support of communist governments in North Korea and the former Yugoslavia. Similarly, several mentioned the US support of Taiwan as explanation for the attack on the embassy. A couple of students noted that the event, coming so close to the tenth anniversary of the Tienanmen massacre, offered the Chinese government an irresistible opportunity to distract attention from its own violent legacy. But the deep-felt anger in Beijing seemed too genuine to have been solely manipulated by the government. And in this sense, my students comments partially echoed Richard Gwyn's (1999) opinion that the Beijing demonstrations also reflected long-held historical animosities against the European powers, whose inequitable treaties subjugated China earlier this century and the one before.

During group work, I noticed that many students were using their bilingual dictionaries and writing down words and sentences to answer the questions. I then made this activity the formal focus of our class. I asked students to write three or four sentences related to their group discussions or the questions on the board. I started to ask particular students to read their sentences out loud. The first student read a sentence which included the word 'sovereignty'. I asked him to repeat it, and I wrote it on the board. In the context of this thesis, I was reminded of the advantages of "prolonged engagement" (see Lynch, 1996) in a particular action research setting and the

opportunity to witness first hand the longterm development of particular language/vocabulary in use.

(on the board)

The event in which NATO bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade has hurt the Chinese government's dignity and people's feelings. This means to invade one country's sovereignty.

After writing this on the board, I underlined the words 'invade' and 'sovereignty'. I then explained the collocational problem (Cf. word depth criteria, Ellis, 1994) of this specific verb, 'invade', not preceding this specific object noun 'sovereignty'. I told the class that we would need to find a verb that was similar in meaning, but more appropriate for the word 'sovereignty'. I asked a couple of students to check their bilingual dictionaries and give the class both Mandarin and Cantonese translations of 'invade'. I then asked them to come up with suggestions to improve the sentence on the board. I wrote a list of the substitutions on the board as the students suggested them : 1) take over 2) an unreasonable attack on (I added the preposition) 3) become involved in (I added the preposition) 3) violate. As soon as I wrote down 'violate', several students said, "Yes!" to which I stated my agreement. I also went over the pronunciation (another criterion of word depth) because many students in my class (especially the one who provided the word) substitute a lip-rounded variation of the labio-dental articulation needed to make the voiced consonant "v".

I then asked the same student to say one of his own sentences. He then said, "Use the violent to stop the violent." I asked him to

elaborate, and he told me that it was a Chinese proverb, which he said to the whole class in both Cantonese and Mandarin. Of note, this student is my most prolific author (and artist), consistently bringing me wonderful compositions and illustrations for them to class. In his compositions he always tries to incorporate high status, low frequency GL words (Corson, 1995). Yet he rarely pays attention to their syntactical variations (i.e. inflection, derivation, and their semantic/discursive implications) when trying to use these new words in his writing. The reasons are both linguistic (contrastive) and social. This student is retired and a senior. His contact with native English speakers outside of class is limited. At the same time, he is keenly interested in world affairs and loves coming to class to discuss current events and write compositions related to his experiences and impressions. Knowing that I am his primary contact with the English-speaking world, he feels that mere "surface" inaccuracies (as he perceives them through the lense of L1 word formation) will not interfere with the important subject matter he wants to focus on and convey to me. Thus, he tends to view such "details" of word depth as a distraction from the more important task of building vocabulary breadth for his compositions. In this example, I asked him if he meant "the people who do violence" or " the idea or act of violence." He said the latter.

On the board I wrote the corrected sentence: "Use violence to stop violence." I mentioned that his example, "the violent", is used to describe a group of people who share the quality that the adjective describes. I gave similar examples such as 'the poor, 'the rich', 'the old', and 'the young'. In the context of critical language awareness, I

mentioned how this form (nominalisation through definite article + adjective) can be seen as a "stereotype" -- a word we've discussed many times before -- in that it implies that the people named this way have always and will always carry this quality or behavior in their lives. Therefore, as I told the class, this was not just a grammatical or spelling problem but also a meaning problem with possible social consequences: How we react to 'violence' might be different from how we react to 'the violent'.

In terms of CLA, we can identify this type of linguistic operation as a form of *reification* (Thompson, cited in Janks, 1998), in which "relations of domination and subordination may be established and sustained by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time" (Thompson, 1990, p. 65). Whereas the use of "violence against violence" might infer momentary and potentially justified retribution, the reification of the nominalised adjective, "the violent", suspends retributive "legitimacy" and infers an irrepressible propensity towards violence -- hence the justification to expand discipline and surveillance on populations and groups categorized this way (see Foucault, 1977).

Soon after, one of my other students, of lower language ability, came up with the following sentence, which I wrote on the board:

In the event, most people said that the leaders of NATO apologized to China without real mind.

I thought the adverbial phrase "without real mind" was quite interesting (and probably a direct translation) but slightly ambiguous

in English, so I asked him to express the sentence and modifying phrase in L1 to the rest of the class so that we might find a better way to express the idea. The students made the following vocabulary suggestions, which I wrote on the board: 1) formality 2) something hiding 3) not sincere. Again, it was apparent that problems with depth of vocabulary knowledge in L2, specifically syntactical/grammatical criteria, was creating difficulties at the sentence level: Students were have trouble generating adverbial forms/phrases that might express the L1 meaning within the existing clausal structure. To make things easier, I modified the sentence by creating a new 'that' clause/complement after the verb 'said': ... "that the apology from NATO's leaders ..." This way, I could incorporate their suggestions into the general framing of the sentence. On the board I wrote the completed predicates: ... that the apology from NATO's leaders: 1) was not sincere. 2) was only a formality. 3) was hiding something. Then, one of my students enthusiastically cried out, "superficial", to which another responded with an emphatic, "Yes. That's the word that [another student absent that day] uses a lot."

A couple of L2 word formation/grammatical issues became implicated in students' answers for questions one and three. Although almost all of the students had said that the USA was directly responsible for an "intentional" act of aggression, many sentences masked this direct responsibility by way of linguistic processes of nominalisation and passivisation. This issue became a focus after a short exchange between two students. The first student, whose L2 abilities are quite advanced, provided the following sentence: "The Chinese leaders still want to be compensate." I wrote

this on the board and pointed out that the final verb needed to be changed to 'compensated'. This student's interlanguage error was surprising yet not uncommon for L1 Chinese speakers, even in an advanced class. Although the speaker had learned, to some degree, a relatively complicated structure in L2 (i.e. possibly described as a 'causative passive', or passive form of an 'object complement'), L1 word formation rules, specifically the absence of verbal inflection to formally mark tenses and passivisation, continued to interfere (see Newnham, 1971, pp. 121-124, on Chinese passivisation). I also asked the student to translate the word 'compensate', as it is a low frequency word with great significance for the issue we were discussing.

Another student then angrily disagreed: "The Chinese government don't ask for any compensate from NATO." First, I was confused by the choice of tense rather than noun derivation (again, a common error based on L1 word formation) and asked him: "Do you mean right now, China doesn't want compensation? Or, do you mean from the time the bombing happened *until* now?" A couple of students made brief comments to him in Cantonese, after which said my second question was correct. I mentioned that he needed to use the present perfect (indefinite past) to express the idea he wanted to say. From my response and answer the class also recognized that the derived noun form 'compensation' was the correct form for the sentence.

On the board, I wrote three sentences that would draw attention to the ideological meanings/effects that can result from linguistic processes of nominalisation and passivisation: 1) China

wants compensation. 2) China wants to be compensated. 3) The USA must compensate China. We discussed the relative degrees of ambiguity and explicitness involved. As noted by Janks (1991, 1998) nominalisation reifies processes (verbals) into timeless, natural "things" and deletes explicit reference to the social groups or individuals who are responsible for the action/process. Passivisation also deletes social agency, but it also shifts attention or points of prominence in a sentence. Whereas an active sentence with a transitive verb places focal prominence on the agent (as subject) and secondary focus on theme (as object), passive voice makes the theme the subject of a transitive verb and gives it primary focus in the sentence (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983, p. 222). In a complex sentence such as number two above, the subject of the main clause/verb would retain sentence focus.

As I noted, in regard to sentence one and two, the identity of those responsible for the bombing and who must now apologize and repair the damage is hidden. Yet the comments of the class and the actions of the protestors in Beijing indicated that a specific "agent", the USA, was responsible. If my students expressed their opinion by way of sentence one, the listener could reasonably assume that 'compensation' (the derived noun) could potentially come from any source (i.e. NATO, the United Nations) thus inferring only partial responsibility attributed to the US. By using the verb in the active voice, however, responsibility and focus is direct and unambiguous and strengthened by the addition of the modal 'must'. Those who strongly believed that the US was solely and intentionally responsible for the bombing now saw how rules of word formation

and syntax could express such sentiments. Those who were unsure or ambivalent now saw how principles of L2 nominalisation and passivisation could be used strategically to formalize the uncertainty or caution that they wanted to convey. For both groups, this increased critical vocabulary awareness came about as a result of lessons that were enhanced by a teacher's developing knowledge of specific problems of contrastive word formation in Chinese and English.

7.3.4. Reflections on a Constructive Dialogue in L2 Vocabulary Pedagogy

In chapter six, I argued that for a constructive dialogue in ESL to proceed, as advocated by Dunn & Lantolf (1998), it must grant equal theoretical status to the experiences and conceptualizations of classroom practitioners. I will continue in this vein by reflecting on my own past initiatives in applying poststructuralist principles in the ESL classroom. From my earliest experiences in the classroom, I have felt that notions of word depth and breadth in ESL pedagogy (see Ellis, 1994; Nation, 1993; Oxford & Crookall, 1990; Wesche & Paribakht, 1996) have been too narrowly defined, resulting in neglect of language and power issues as they relate to words/signs. Arguably, this neglect would be one more example of the unexamined ways in which the discourse of ESL normalizes passive citizenship practices.

Many ESL theorists and administrators would have several predictable arguments to justify this oversight: First, they might

suggest that the skills involved in critical vocabulary awareness are so cognitively and conceptually demanding that it is a specialization they can only be undertaken at the highest of L2 levels. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs) (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 1996), reflecting this assumption, reserves discussion of "social problems" until its "advanced proficiency" stage (Stage 3: Bench 9-12). The CLBs are somewhat self-fulfilling in this regard, lexicalising its task descriptors and performance criteria in ways that predispose the "advanced" status accorded social issues; for example: "Compare educational systems and options, including the underlying philosophy and values in a 20 minute oral presentation" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1996, p. 71). Why not "schools" instead of "educational systems"? Is knowledge of the task descriptors "underlying philosophy and values" a prerequisite for discussion? Are these criteria necessary for participation, and could they be reasonably met by native speakers?

The problem with ranking CLA as a "higher-order" activity (and graded, synthetic syllabuses in general, see Nunan, 1988) is that it treats language learning and ESL students homogeneously, neglecting both the strategic competencies they have had to develop in L1 and the differentiated social positions they would have in their adopted country based on language, power and identity. As I have argued throughout this thesis, it is often the intrinsic *social* importance of the content and context, for a particular community, which propels language experimentation (essential to depth of word acquisition) not some hypothesized threshold of generalized competencies, whose mastery would be a curricular precondition for

an L2 lesson on "serious" social matters, as implied by the CLBs. An important example in this chapter would be our classroom focus on words such as "compensation". This specialist GL word, with its low frequency and high status (Corson, 1995) would be seen as outside of any "core" vocabulary for anyone but the most advanced and academically inclined L2 students. But for my students (almost all of whom would be categorized by the CLB as Stage 2, Benchmarks 5-8, intermediate proficiencies), social contingencies of ethnicity, history, and nationality created a unique set of circumstances where mastery of form and use of an otherwise advanced or "obscure" word suddenly became a priority. The key point is a discursive one: linguistic criteria used to develop standardized language continua and hierarchies, alone, should not determine if and when we teach critical vocabulary awareness.

A second argument against concentrated study in critical vocabulary awareness would be based on the premise that social situations in which the meanings of words are "unstable" or "struggled over by competing social groups" are so rare as to make such study superfluous to the development of general language proficiency. Such an argument has a disconcerting familiarity to it, in that it aligns easily with current neoliberal discourses on "reduced spending" and the putative need for accountability and competitiveness in education. While it is fortunate for Canadian social peace that events such as the Quebec referendum do not occur on a frequent basis, the issue of "frequency" and "coreness" as central criteria for allocating space in vocabulary curricula warrants critical analyses, especially in terms of the underlying paradigmatic

assumptions involved. As Wesche and Paribakht (1996, p. 15) note, estimates of vocabulary size (breadth), and designations of high and low frequency, are often based statistically on frequency lists from written or transcribed oral corpuses (see Carter & McCarthy, 1988, Ch. 1; Crystal, 1987, pp. 86-87; Nation, 1993, p. 124; Qian, 1998). The validity of such lists are especially problematic in specialized professional and academic areas where a statistical reading of low-frequency words can vary widely depending on the specific type of corpus used (Wesche & Paribakht, 1996, p. 16).

In terms of theory, structuralist principles underlie much of this work. The study of frequency lists, as an indicator and measure of vocabulary breadth, upholds Saussurean principles of 'synchronism' (as they detemporalize a field of study), 'arbitrariness' (since they measure frequency relative to other words in a corpus) and the assumed homogeneity of the speakers within a specific language (*la langue*). Variety in notions of "coreness" and frequency, when postulated, is based on disciplinary specializations (i.e. "technical" vocabulary; see Nation, 1993, pp. 123-124) rather than issues of identity and power, or historical memory. For example, what should we make of a single word, such as 'sovereignty', whose contested meanings and associations precipitated the federal government to seek a ruling from the Supreme Court on the "wording" of future referenda. Do conventional notions of word breadth, high and low frequency, adequately address this example for the purposes of pedagogy? Similarly, do conventional measures of frequency sufficiently explain the recent acknowledgement of Quebec's "uniqueness" instead of its "distinctness", as proposed by

Canada's premiers at a meeting after the referendum? What about words that are rarely if ever spoken, or only within the sanctity of commemorative events because of the painful memories they signify for specific communities (see Eppert, *et. al.* 1996; Simon & Armitage-Simon, 1995)? And what about words that have split-referentiality for a specific community, such as the unavoidable invocation of Hong Kong's future when Quebec's sovereignty was discussed in my class? Does the notion "(in)frequency" properly relate to the types of pedagogical activities that these words deserve and the social importance of the events that they signify?

The same concerns can be raised in regards to the criteria that define word depth and the kinds of classroom activities proposed to realize them. Criteria of phonological and graphic form; denotation; connotation; grammatical, collocational and associative knowledge (Ellis, 1994) are all important. But what they imply in the absence of more comprehensive discursive measures is consensus and timelessness: The objects of study (words/signs) are reified, placed outside the specific historical (dis)junctures -- such as the Quebec referendum -- when suppressed and once invisible meanings of marginalized communities are suddenly revived, there to rub against the grain, or interfere with the "effortless" imposition presupposed by the naturalisation of language. In the words of Volosinov/ Bakhtin (1973), "any current curse word can become a word of praise, and current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie. This *inner dialectic quality* of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crises or revolutionary changes" (italics included, p. 23).

These were the types of questions and concerns that first motivated me to experiment with poststructural principles in my ESL classroom. How might notions of "word depth" be expanded to include knowledge of the "inner dialectics" of signs/words"? How might we encourage students to recognize the historical moments of "social crises" when word meanings and the social responses they promote are "up for grabs"? How do we show ESL students that they are also included in the bigger picture, their consent, anger or apathy as citizens the object of textual strategies used in the media?

One of my first efforts in this direction occurred during lessons I was teaching on the Gulf War (Morgan, 1992/1993; 1997b; 1998). In class, we examined a list from the *Globe and Mail* newspaper (Staff, 1991 [reprinted from *The Guardian Weekly*]) that showed the vocabulary used by the Western media to demonize the Iraqis and alternatively valorize the Western coalition forces (e.g. Their men are troops, hordes; our men are boys, lads. They destroy, kill; we take out, suppress, eliminate, neutralize; Morgan, 1998, pp. 135-137). With this list, students actively explored the non-neutrality of language by assuming the roles of reporters for the *London Times* or *Baghdad Herald* in a writing role play exercise. In a follow-up activity, I had students work on a vocabulary chart that analyzed denotation, connotation, and the types of feelings and associations (e.g. positive, negative or neutral) each word from the list evoked in the students (Morgan, 1998, pp. 37-38).

As I noted in the published versions of these lessons, poststructural principles I gleaned from reading Derrida (1982), Peirce (1989, 1990), Weedon (1987) were extremely important in

helping me conceptualize the kinds of activities I organized. The strength of these lessons, in my opinion, is that they helped expose the subtle and not so subtle ways in which mainstream media "manufacture consent" (Chomsky, cited in Cummins, 1996) in our society. One of the most satisfying moments of these lessons occurred when one of my students said, "So, journalists are not neutral" (Morgan, 1998, p. 38).

At the same time, I make an interesting observation about the relative success and failure of these poststructural-inspired, vocabulary lessons. I note that two students had trouble with the analytical format of the last activity and preferred to write out sentences as a means of exploring their meanings. I then speculated that those who could easily detach and categorize language items would find this exercise more useful than students more experienced in associative and holistic literacy skills. In the infinite wisdom of hindsight, I can see that the suggested binarism between analytic and holistic skills may have oversimplified a much wider range of L2 vocabulary strategies taking place. Based on word depth criteria, writing out sentences can also be seen as an "analytical" activity directed towards developing collocational, associative and syntactical depth. Also, based on the discussion in this chapter, L1 Chinese students might feel that a focus on sentential level knowledge helps them better deal with the contrastive difficulties posed by principles of word derivation and inflection in English. As well, I know that I would expand the range of responses to students comments on the feelings that they associated with a specific term. Rather than just drawing out negative and positive associations, I would now pose

questions related to principles of word motivation -- not as absolute principles, but discursively constructed, as detailed by Corson (1995) and Cummins (1998) -- that may help promote such feelings: Did the sound of the word make you feel that way? What part of the word made you feel that this was "forever" or that "somebody was responsible"? In your language, does this word have a negative feeling? Why?

In short, I would complement the poststructural concern with the unbounded, multivocal, ideological sign (Derrida's *différance*, founded on Saussurean principles of arbitrariness) with principles of word formation and cognition derived from applied and psycholinguistics. In the classroom, I wouldn't be too concerned about determining which paradigmatic or theoretical assumptions were more correct for L2 vocabulary pedagogy. Instead, I would be more interested in the specific points of articulation, or the interface between conceptual fields, suggested by a specific L2 vocabulary problem that emerged in our lessons. This would seem to be a reasonable approach to begin a "productive" dialogue on L2 vocabulary pedagogy.

Poststructuralism illuminates and enriches our understanding of language, power, and subjectivity. Applied to ESL, as I have attempted on numerous occasions (Morgan, 1992/1993; 1995/1996, 1997b, 1998), poststructural principles suggest many useful strategies to enhance our ability to "read between the lines". But the ability to read *between* the lines is inextricable from the composition of the lines themselves. In this regard, I believe that poststructuralism has neglected areas of applied and psycholinguistic

expertise which might increase our understanding of how words/signs are potentially anchored to material "realities" and prior experiences. For critical ESL practitioners, then, there are useful applications to be gained by drawing selectively from both intellectual "traditions" -- subordinated, of course, to the needs and dynamics of the classroom.

CHAPTER 8

FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PEDAGOGIES

8.1 ESL TEACHERS AS CRITICAL CITIZENS

This thesis has revolved around a case study on teaching the Quebec referendum in a community-based ESL program. In chapter four, a detailed or "thick description" (Cf. Geertz, 1973; Lynch, 1996) of program and classroom dynamics, social identity issues, and the evolving political culture of the community within the larger society, was provided in order to shed light on the pedagogical strategies I have pursued. In other chapters, I have taken up various implications of this study within traditional ESL domains such as teacher research (chapter three), pedagogical grammar (chapter six), and L2 vocabulary pedagogy (chapter seven). In each of these areas of ESL specialization, it has been my intent to explore how the dominant discourses of ESL position students in terms of reducing their expectations and aspirations as active and critical citizens. Throughout these chapters, I have analyzed and critiqued the discourses of ESL through framing techniques that are unmistakably postmodern and poststructural in inspiration. At the same time, my interests have been in realizing what some (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998; Guba, 1990; Lynch, 1996) have called a "paradigm dialogue" by way of my experiences in the classroom and my ongoing professional interest in the canonical texts of both applied linguistics and postmodernism, broadly speaking.

In this final chapter, I shift focus away from more traditional ESL domains (i.e. L2 vocabulary, pedagogical grammar) in order to expand upon foundational principles set out in the conceptual underpinnings for community-based ESL pedagogies in chapter one: The key points I reiterate: Language and language education is a *social* practice. In the types of community programs to which I refer, social needs (and social scientific modes of explanation) are often indistinguishable from and sometimes prior to linguistic needs; at times, they alone may constitute the focus of pedagogy in a "language" program. When prioritized, a focus on social issues and analyses reflects an underlying premise that teachers and students are active participants/citizens, rather than passive recipients, in shaping sociocultural identities, values and norms (see Corson, 1997; Cummins, 1996; Morgan, 1997b, 1998; New London Group, 1996; Peirce [Norton], 1995, 1997). Essential to their role as critical citizens, teachers need to examine the dominant values of the larger society in order to better understand how these values are both consciously and unconsciously reproduced in the classroom.

Admittedly, the vision of ESL and ESL teacher-training which I have put forward in this thesis is a marginal one. Although socioculturally-diverse, community-based agencies such as CSSAT reflect the majority (56%) of ESL delivery programs in Ontario (TESL Ontario, 1999), the current trend is towards increased curricular standardization (as reflected in the Canadian Language Benchmarks) and centralized modes of assessment, which attempt to measure L2 ability and determine student placements irrespective of the local,

contextualizing factors that distinguish one community program from another.

In respect to teacher education programs, the role of the ESL teacher as critical citizen has been largely ignored or muted (see e.g. Sanaoui, 1997). In Ontario, most TESL certificate courses offered through private language schools provide part-time or short-term "survival" courses for young teachers planning to go abroad. The emphasis is on quick overviews of skill-based activities, communicative approaches, pedagogical grammar, pronunciation, lesson planning, and needs assessment. In college and university programs, where more time is made available for theoretical issues, research in SLA, descriptive and cognitive perspectives are almost exclusively offered (see Sanaoui, 1997). If introduced at all in TESL, notions of language and power are conceptually isolated from the day to day language activities and subdisciplines that define the usual corpus of materials and methods in applied linguistics (see Benesch, 1993, 1998; Cooke, 1987; Corson, 1997; Peirce 1989, 1995; Pennycook, 1989, 1994b; Phillipson, 1992). That these areas of specialization themselves might be implicated in the formation of identities and power relations would be an unlikely topic of study in traditional TESL programs.

In fact, this state of affairs has become so problematic that many of the ELT profession's most eminent figures -- and whose publications shape the traditional canon in applied linguistics -- feel increasingly compelled to speak out against it. Along with Henry Widdowson, whose concerns are quoted in chapter one, we have H. Douglas Brown, for years a leading figure in ESL teacher education,

giving a plenary at the 30th annual TESOL convention in Chicago titled, "The Art of Subversive Teaching," an inspiring clarion call for young teachers to rock the boat of tradition and ideological complacency. Another esteemed voice of warning would be Christopher Brumfit's: "The training and development of language teaching experts has been very insensitive to economic, social, and political implications of what happens" (Corson, 1997, p. 167; originally cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 254). Nonetheless, new teachers continue to receive a constrained perspective on the nature of language and the ramifications of their activities in the classroom. As Corson (1997) succinctly states, "just this perception that 'language teaching' is its central function, may have distorted the epistemological foundations of applied linguistics in general" (p. 167).

As I have argued (Morgan, 1997a, 1998), along with others (Ashworth, 1985; Clarke, 1994; Cooke, 1993; Elson, 1989; van Lier, 1994) teachers are not the only ones losing out in the seeming trend to delimit their roles to dutiful functionaries in top-down systems of control. ESL teachers, in fact, are uniquely positioned to witness the immediate effects and long-term consequences of government policy for diverse sociocultural groups. Similarly, ESL teachers can be seen as intermediaries of sorts, translating the macro, dominant values of a society and identifying how they are perceived, mediated or resisted at the micro, community level in ways that challenge and enrich our society. As Cummins (1994, 1996) has detailed, classrooms are complex, intersubjective environments, where diverse experiences and perceptions of the world are exchanged and alternatives posited. ESL teachers, through their interactions with

students, can favour -- and thus normalize -- the status quo (Cf. "coercive relations of power," Cummins, 1996), or they can encourage "dissenting" opinions and "unconventional" language activities that ultimately compel us to look at ourselves in ways that potentially realize the ideals of social justice and equality (Cf. "collaborative relations of power," Cummins, 1996), which our elites and governments often verbalize without justification.

I do not want to underestimate the challenges for ESL teachers that an emphasis on advocacy and critical citizenship presents. Freire's (1997, p. 85) insights on the importance of grasping the totality of a particular "limit-situation" is worth remembering in this context. Teachers, over-worked and under increasing surveillance in the name of accountability, might find it almost impossible to explore anything beyond their immediate lesson plans and job descriptions. But without a broader sense of the "larger picture" within which one's teaching takes place, the possibilities for change -- whether it is in the community, society, or even one's own job conditions -- in any kind of substantive and permanent way is greatly hampered.

In this spirit of teacher advocacy and broader social enquiry, the final sections of this thesis will reflect upon the larger picture of official Canadian multiculturalism, within which community-based ESL programs such as CSSAT evolve and define themselves both culturally and politically as participants in Canadian nation-building. It is through the (un)official lens of multiculturalism that newcomers weigh their responses to events such as the Quebec referendum. Such responses are even more complicated when the "narrative of the nation" (Cf. Bhabha, 1990) is itself undergoing pressure to

accommodate what might be irreconcilable demands from aboriginal, founding nations, and recently-arrived minorities seeking the formal recognition of their dignity and equality.

8.2 MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

Writing on the politics of multiculturalism, Charles Taylor (1994) argues that the "desire for recognition" on the part of minority groups demands that we go beyond the simple acknowledgement of cultural differences and attempt to evaluate the unique contributions of minority groups on terms they would recognize. Taylor is quite mindful of the controversial issues involved, not least of all the contemporary politics of identity in which the evaluative ability of "outsiders" would always be suspect. But Taylor would counter that to grant equal status to the accomplishments (i.e. intellectual, technological, artistic, etc.) of other cultures simply on demand, or based purely on anti-objectivist notions of "incommensurability" or "irreducible difference", is a form of condescension. Without actually immersing oneself in the value systems, beliefs, and prior accomplishments of a given community, the peremptory judgement of equality actually patronizes its intended beneficiary. Invariably and implicitly, the evaluative standards of the dominant society are retained.

And so the judgements implicitly and unconsciously will cram the others into our categories. For instance we will think of their "artists" as creating "works," which we then can include in our canon. By implicitly invoking our standards to judge all

civilizations and cultures, the politics of difference can end up making everyone the same. (Taylor, 1994, p. 71)

Taylor's point is an important one in that it specifies the kinds of misguided assumptions that contribute to the superficial forms of "benevolent" and "celebratory" multiculturalism discussed earlier in this thesis (see Cummins & Danesi, 1990; May, 1994; Sears & Hughes, 1996; Williams, 1998). Recognition without critical engagement is a hollow and demeaning social practice, for minority groups as much as it is for academics concerned with theoretical dialogue, or ethnic community leaders whose "token" participation is courted by mainstream political parties. But there is a larger issue here, and one that is central to Taylor's overall purposes. Positive judgements of a minority's "real worth" also enable and compel us to make concomitant judgements on a minority's real needs, especially as they pertain to its long-term vitality and survival, and even when such collective needs emerge in forms that conflict with important individual rights in a liberal democracy. Thus, in the context of the Quebec referendum, Taylor believes that Canadian society can and should support social and language policies that promote Quebec as a "distinct society" and assure its continued existence as a French-speaking society for generations to come.

When cultural survival is at stake, Taylor would extend such "collective" rights to all minority communities. And as national borders become less restrictive and societies become more diverse, the need for governments to intercede on behalf of immigrant and aboriginal minorities may indeed intensify. Governments committed to social justice would, at times, need to treat different groups

differently -- especially in areas of education and language policy -- in order to ensure their continued presence in society (see Corson, 1993, in press; Cummins, 1996; May, 1994; Williams, 1998). Such preferential measures, according to Taylor (1994), would require the identification of "fundamental liberties", which "should never be infringed," and important "privileges and immunities ... that can be revoked or restricted for reasons of public policy -- although one would need a strong reason to do this" (p. 59). This would be a daunting challenge, but one that Taylor (1994) feels is not impossible nor substantially different from the usual tensions of balancing "liberty and equality, or prosperity and justice" (p. 60) in liberal democracies.

Taylor's discussion suggests a number of practical applications for teachers working in community-based ESL programs and interested in developing critical citizenship. The "desire for recognition," as formulated by Taylor, requires that ESL teachers engage substantively and critically with students' ideas and not simply offer a blanket endorsement of each and every perspective offered, even though such positive judgements might be well-intentioned and guided by principles of respect for diversity. As well, the "desire for recognition" would suggest that ESL teachers develop more classroom materials that emphasize the unique contributions that particular minority groups have made to Canadian society, past and present. In CSSAT, for example, this could mean introducing more ESL materials that focus on aboriginal traditions and issues in a positive light, which would challenge the frequent image of dependency and militancy portrayed in mainstream media. The

recognition of "real worth," might increase students' generosity and empathy for other minorities, even when important individual "privileges and immunities" are restricted in order to ensure the collective survival of particular groups in danger of disappearing.

8.2.1 The Politics of (Mis)Recognition at CSSAT

The "politics of recognition" is wonderfully written and meticulously argued. It is certain to be read repeatedly and with great interest by many Canadian politicians, constitutional lawyers, and ethics professors. At CSSAT, however, the eloquence and logical persuasiveness of Taylor's position would be unlikely to win over too many subscribers. Many of my students, echoing Burnaby's (1998) observation, resent "the fact that French-English issues have a more central and entrenched place in the national attention than do their own issues" (p. 248). As some students have argued in class, the reasons chosen to override "individual" rights in Quebec (e.g. mandatory French schooling for immigrant children; French as the predominant language on commercial signs) have more to do with the realities of Canadian politics than they do with cultural survival. That French rights (and not Chinese-Canadian rights such as a "head tax" rebate) preoccupy national attention, and that recent Prime Ministers almost invariably come from Quebec, testify to the electoral benefits of wooing and satisfying the aspirations of Quebecois rather than the legitimate "survival" needs reflected in policy. These are issues of power and discourse that go beyond the

formal balancing of individual versus collective rights in legal and constitutional documents.

In the classroom, I have tried to balance or counteract such impressions. On numerous occasions, I have brought in ESL materials that outline the contributions of early French settlers in the building of Canada, their equal status in the founding of the Canadian dominion, and the economic and political subordination French-Canadians have experienced since confederation (see Cameron & Derwing, 1996; Sauvé & Sauvé, 1997). In terms of cultural and linguistic survival, I have talked about the apparently irreversible trend towards assimilation for once-vibrant francophone communities outside of Quebec (see Beaujot, 1998; Magnet, 1998; Veltman, 1998). On a more anecdotal note, I have talked about the tendency of Canadian anglophones to remain unilingual while their francophone compatriots make more of an effort to learn English. Yet the predominant reading of current events in my class is that it is the relative numerical strength of francophone voters in Quebec which has determined the "preferential" treatment this particular minority culture enjoys in Canada, not the inherent justness of their "survival" needs. And this may portend a number of difficulties down the road for ESL programs such as CSSAT and perhaps multiculturalism in general.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, individual and collective identities, new ethnicities and solidarities, are (re)negotiated through language practices both in the classroom and the larger society. Invariably, in the process of meaning-making, different or previously subjugated interpretations of signs/events

will emerge (Cf. Volosinov/ Bakhtin, 1973), based on past experiences or on a wider range of semiotic options and discourses that immigrant communities encounter in their new country and from abroad. How these "hybrid" ethnicities and communities perceive and negotiate dominant values cannot be easily presumed. Indeed, the results can be both enlightening and disturbing, unveiling contradictions and hypocracies previously naturalized by a society's dominant discourses.

The presentation of a liberal democracy's central ideals, entrenched legally and constitutionally, is one such example. Those who abide closest to these ideals, or who have gained the most from them, recognize their imperfection but view their pursuit as the greatest good. And failure to attain these ideals are often perceived and presented as temporary anomalies or technicalities that can be rectified with only minor tinkering (i.e. amendments or judicial rulings) with the "wording" of key legal and constitutional texts. But what if other collectivities, in a liberal, multicultural society, view these "anomalies" as integral to the functioning of the political system, the *de facto* expression of power, where the rhetorical elements of policy make its "contradictory" anomalies possible. In this view, the transgression of the ideal is perceived by some as its actualization, and it potentially becomes the example by which a minority community represents its own interests politically in relation to both other minorities and the larger society.

Although such a discussion might seem overly abstract, a recent series of disputes involving Markham's Chinese and Muslim communities and its municipal government illustrate some of the

practical and political realities involved. Moreover, the dispute described below, I believe, draws attention to a number of potential tensions that can arise from Taylor's model for multiculturalism in a liberal democracy.

8.2.2 "Assertive Multiculturalism" in Markham

In Markham, a small municipality bordering the north-eastern region of metropolitan Toronto, city council recently commissioned and received a draft report stating that the beliefs of specific communities cannot be allowed to interfere in decisions on zoning (Swainson, 1999). What precipitated the report and subsequent ruling was a 75-name petition from the local Chinese community protesting the building of a mosque, which would include a cold storage space for the deceased prior to funerals. The petition stated: "To some ethnic groups, in particular the Chinese, this kind of place of worship would bring bad luck, death or disaster and should be kept away from the living" (Swainson, 1999, p. B1). In reference to Taylor's discussion on the "politics of recognition", it is important to note that the petitioners claimed that the mosque interfered with the ancient practice of Chinese *feng shui*, or geomancy, in which the positioning of objects and buildings must conform to "natural harmony" in order to bring good luck in the future (Swainson, 1999, p. B5). In fact, the practice of *feng shui* has been cited in three recent petitions to the Ontario Municipal Board against the building of funeral homes -- the others in North York and Scarborough. In addition to *feng shui*, Markham city council has also been asked to

change street numbers that in Chinese culture are believed to bring bad luck. The mayor's response in this regard was negative, but also indicative of current developments in his municipality: "[T]his whole thing is becoming a bigger and bigger issue here in Markham" (Swainson, 1999, p. B5).

By no means would I suggest that the demands made by the petitioners in Markham reflect a general consensus of Chinese-Canadian attitudes. In my own class at CSSAT, when this issue was discussed, several students expressed their scepticism regarding feng shui, and several more voiced their disapproval of the public action taken by the petitioners, stating that the move would lead to bad feelings. Nor should we view the official rejection of the feng shui argument as the end of the issue. What I would like to suggest is that we consider the events in Markham intertextually and discursively, as part of the ongoing negotiation of a new political identity in which principles of multiculturalism and minority rights are officially "recognized", and in which the federation's largest "minority" -- its francophone population -- is perceived to be actively and sometimes aggressively seeking powers that will assure its own collective "survival" in the future. Let me emphasize this point: The events in Markham did not occur within a social vacuum. Nor were they the inevitable manifestations of deep-rooted beliefs transferred intact and over the generations from China. Rather, the actions taken were based in large part on current perceptions of the dominant society (its accepted modes of power and politics), irrespective of the empirical validity such perceptions may hold for an unpartisan observer.

In Markham, three salient points can be made to confirm the intertextuality and identity negotiation taking place. First, we should reiterate the point raised in chapter four that the act of petitioning government is relatively new for most Chinese-Canadians (see Demarra, 1996; Vincent, 1997). As noted by Metro Councilor Olivia Chow, the colonial experience of people born in Hong Kong is that "they had no say in government whatsoever" (Demara, 1996, p. B6). Chow also identifies the continued presence of deep-rooted Confucianist values behind a common belief that one should "not offend or challenge authority" (Demarra, 1996, p. B6; King, 1991). Clearly, if these cultural and historical proscriptions existed, their inhibitory force has been diminished in the Canadian context.

The second point to note, and one directly related to Taylor's arguments, would be the formal appeal to the dominant society for "protection" of feng shui. As my students told me, such an action would not occur in China because of the relative homogeneity of the society, which would make the protection of feng shui for purposes of cultural survival unnecessary, and also because of the relative arbitrariness of government, which would stall such attempts before their inception. In this perspective, it might be tempting to view the feng shui argument as simply a strategem, or zero-sum game, in that these petitioners were in effect forcing Markham council to choose whose collective rights, or "real worth", deserved greater recognition within a liberal democracy -- Chinese or Muslim. But I would argue that the "self-serving" dimensions of this petition are also balanced by newcomers' emerging perceptions of the new political culture of which they are part. In the light of Canadian "multiculturalism", the

petitioners recognized that the preservation of practices and beliefs that shape collectivities is a moral argument valued by the dominant society. Indeed, the selective approval of the dominant society -- Swainson's article quotes an interior designer in Toronto who applies feng shui in her work -- can have the effect of increasing the prominence of a "favoured" practice or belief within the immigrant community in which it was conceived.

The third point of interest is where this petition takes place. Both Markham and Scarborough have the highest concentration of recent Chinese immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Markham, as well, is one of the most affluent communities in the GTA, and was the site of past disputes between longterm residents and politicians who voiced their resentment at the visible transformation of their neighborhoods by the influx of new Chinese immigrants and businesses catering to their specific needs and tastes. Relative numerical strength is a key aspect of this point. Note that such petitions (e.g. for recognition of feng shui and new street numbers) have not occurred in downtown Toronto or in other municipalities in Ontario. In Markham, however, where the Chinese community is recognizing its collective numerical strength within this particular political jurisdiction, such petitions are becoming "a bigger and bigger issue" in the words of the mayor (Swainson, 1999, p. B5).

In sum, I would characterize these developments as signaling the emergence of an *assertive multiculturalism*. On the one hand, this practice is a specific reflection of the Canadian context in which the liberal state acknowledges its responsibilities to maintain the integrity of those cultural forms, beliefs, and practices through which

a particular minority identifies itself and by which its long-term survival is ensured. On the other hand, assertive multiculturalism is guided by the perception that the state must be persuaded and sometimes compelled to make positive acts of recognition, especially when collective rights supersede individual "privileges and immunities", in Taylor's sense. What are the most compelling ways to assert a collective claim for recognition? In a liberal democracy, the writing of petitions, legal challenges, public attention through media, political activity during election campaigns, can all be effective. And as both the Markham event and Quebec referendum show, when "minority issues" are conjoined to political boundaries where the "endangered" minority may have relative numerical strength or even represent a majority, the likelihood of winning formal recognition is greatly increased. Even if recognition is initially denied, assertive multiculturalism recognizes that, in the Canadian context, continuous and sustained demands for recognition (e.g. the ongoing threat of another Quebec referendum) will eventually shift the framework of evaluation (i.e. the balance between individual versus collective rights) to such a degree that substantial concessions and legal powers, which would have been unthinkable in the past, will be offered outright.

In liberal democracies, the downside to assertive multiculturalism, however, is its tendency towards bipolar and adversarial relations in which legal experts are relied upon to arbitrate in an ever-widening range of issues. Certainly, the absence of violence to resolve dispute is most welcome, but the fact that legalistic models and values tend to precipitate bipolar, adversarial

encounters is not. This point was raised at the Markham town hall meeting where Muslim and Chinese residents spoke about their respective concerns. In what was described as a "growing rift between various ethnic communities in Greater Toronto," Tarak Fatah, who spoke on behalf of Markham's 4,000 member Muslim community, observed that "there is no effort on the part of each community to get together, so each thinks that when they sort out their issues with the mainstream, their problems are over ... and, of course they aren't" (Swainson, 1999, pp. B1, B5).

Fatah's concerns parallel my own, as raised in this chapter. If we are witnessing a "growing rift" between minority communities, we need to inquire into its sources and possible resolutions. Otherwise, the future of multiculturalism will become increasingly sectarian rather than mutually supportive. Minority communities in Canada are not simply acting out primordial forms of cultural expression. They are, in fact, negotiating new identities, especially political identities, in which their perceptions of the new society (including the dialectic between legal and actual power) are measured against older beliefs and practices, resulting in new "traditions" that increase the life chances of those who understand themselves through these forms of expression. Fatah's observation of a growing rift between minorities in the GTA, I believe, signals a growing assertiveness in multicultural relations, in particular the perception that official recognition of minority needs and worth (Cf. Taylor, 1994) is won primarily through sustained legal/political action rather than intrinsic or humanistic criteria. And as Fatah astutely observed, the most troubling consequence of such a

perception would be the growing willingness of relatively powerful minorities to "go it alone" in asserting their claims against the mainstream, unaware or uninterested in the effects such claims might have on less powerful groups.

8.2.3 Assertive Multiculturalism: Underlying Sources and Causes?

Discourse and intertextuality are complex notions of meaning-making. It would be unwise to assign a direct causal relationship between specific regional and national events occurring in tandem or over time. Yet events such as the Markham dispute do not take place or form in a sociopolitical void. Such events emerge alongside the construction of a new "national narrative", which may or may not appease the painful memories of aboriginal conquest, racism, and anglocentricism in Canada.

My depiction of "assertive multiculturalism" does not imply that minorities who follow this path are in any way undermining or abusing Canadian "values". Arguably, through their actions, they are providing Canadian society with a more realistic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the policies and forms of government we are trying to implement for an increasingly multicultural, multiracial future. In this regard, Magnet (1998) is blunt in his criticism. He sees an increase in intergroup conflict as a result of failure on the part of government to provide a clear rationale for the principles underlying its official languages policy. Minority language

communities "experience daily helter-skelter judicial and bureaucratic administration of their language rights" (p. 202).

Williams offers a similar perspective regarding the inconsistencies of official multiculturalism in Canada. From a politically pragmatic view, multiculturalism was originally conceived in large part as a way to appease Western Canadian opposition to official bilingualism during the Trudeau years (1998, pp. 17-18). Consistent with Trudeau's style of governing, a flurry of legislation (the Constitution Act of 1982, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms) and state agencies (e.g. the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism, created in 1973) were quickly created to institutionalize multiculturalism alongside bilingualism as the twin pillars of Canada's official identity. Multicultural policy then shifted towards a description of demographic realities -- the fact that immigration was transforming and diversifying the traditional British and French make-up of the society -- and the importance of cultural retention in building a more pluralistic, outward-looking society heralded as a "cultural mosaic" in contradistinction to the assimilationist "melting pot" of the USA.

More recently, under the Mulroney governments, multicultural policy has been redefined in terms of global commercial needs and the prospects for expanded international trade as a result of the linguistic and business expertise newcomers bring to Canada. This latter development, in Williams' perspective, reflects our continuing drift towards an American-inspired individualism, in which values such as competition, initiative, and commercial flexibility have

become preeminent and grafted onto our collective self-understanding.

Culture has become a commodity to be assessed, priced, served, and repackaged to suit the exigencies of each situation. The competing claims of cultural groups to public recognition and resourcing are increasingly being heard and adjudicated by appointed, nonelected political servants. (Williams, 1998, pp. 23-24)

Multiculturalism, as a form of entrepreneurship, is a troubling development, in my opinion. The political inconsistencies and "new" economic priorities articulated above by both Magnet and Williams suggest underlying causative factors -- maybe not in whole, but certainly in part -- that precipitate the forms of "assertive multiculturalism" I have discussed in this chapter. Indeed, as an explanation for events in Markham, Williams's observations are strikingly pertinent:

As they become better organized, astute groups will press for a greater recognition of their cultural rights, over and above those already recognized ... Multiculturalism, from this perspective is a set of institutional opportunities for individual and group advancement in a competitive environment. In other words, it becomes a platform for social progress. (Williams, 1998, pp. 25-26)

Multiculturalism, as "a platform for social progress" is not necessarily a bad thing. But what might be problematic relates to whose notion of "social progress" wins the day in a "liberal" society. The roots of liberalism, it should be remembered, are economic and individualistic (e.g. Adam Smith's "invisible hand"; Homo Economicus;

the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mills; the collective good defined by the sum of self-interested individuals seeking to maximize their opportunities; see e.g. Polanyi, 1944) and are closer to the values espoused in American society than they are to Canada's collectivist traditions, which as Williams rightly notes, are in danger of gradually disappearing.

Policy inconsistencies, political concerns, and the pervasive influence of Canada's powerful southern neighbour can all be recognized as influential factors in changing the ways multiculturalism is viewed and implemented in Canada. Still, as Taylor (1994), and the various contributors to Ricento and Burnaby's (1998) volume argue, the future of Canadian multiculturalism (and Canadian liberalism, for that matter) is inseparable from the direction Quebec takes in defining itself within or outside the Canadian federation. Quite likely, Quebec independence would hasten assimilation into the American model and mark the end for the kinds of collectivist, social experiments that have defined the country from its inception.

8.2.4 Reflections on Taylor's "Politics of Recognition"

One of the weaknesses that I find in my reading of Taylor's discussion -- and perhaps of liberalism in general -- is its intent to delimit and conceptually remove the operation of power relations from principles deemed essential and universal to the human condition and which must be reified in the constitutionality of the democratic state. In this way, liberalism both naturalizes and

institutionalizes its own operations of power. Taylor (1994), it should be noted, barely conceals his contempt for arguments inspired by the work of Derrida and Foucault, dismissing them as "subjectivist, half-baked neo-Nietzschean theories" because of their attempt to turn "the entire issue into one of power and counterpower" (p. 70). But in my opinion, Foucault's understanding of the contingencies and dynamics of power relations, discourse and subjectivity, would seem to suggest a useful counterbalance to liberalism's search for unassailable possessions of the human condition, which would need to be codified both legally and constitutionally. Indeed, the very acts of codification and constitution-making could be described as "technologies of power," in Foucault's (1997, p. 225) perspective, on the one hand, providing individuals and groups with new formalized liberties and forms of self-understanding, while on the other, submitting populations to new forms of objectification, measurement, and domination.

This ever-present duality of power relations, in my opinion, is far more pervasive and ubiquitous in constitutional life than liberal thinkers wish to allow for. For example, in liberal democracies, the codification of rights are extremely important. However, when they appear to be ineffectual or anachronistic, the state's legal and political experts (most often lawyers by training) preoccupy themselves with the originary constitutional documents of the state, looking for ways to interpret or amend them to fit contemporary circumstances. For many politicians and legal experts, the text itself comes to represent "reality", in that many believe the problems at hand might be rectified with just the right amendments added or

deleted, or by the intervention of an enlightened and activist court. But in some cases, no amount of tinkering will redeem these documents, and the procedural rules entrenched to safeguard them can be so cumbersome that they become obstacles to overcome in the pursuit of social justice (witness the ill-fated Meech Lake and Charlottetown Constitutional Accords of 1987 and 1992; see Magnet, 1998, pp. 200-201). Those few, unilateral changes that do occur, and which are permitted by law, can sometimes appear superficial, especially when measured against emerging expectations generated by economic globalization and integrated communication systems. Once again, note the duality of power: A document designed to ensure necessary "freedoms" simultaneously creates new modes of domination.

Taylor's proposal, that a society distinguish "fundamental liberties", which "should never be infringed and therefore ought to be unassailably entrenched," from important "privileges and immunities ... that can be revoked or restricted for reasons of public policy," (p. 59) would appear to me to be an unworkable if not calamitous situation for government and the judiciary. The codification or entrenchment of two tiers of "rights" would be extremely complex. Just finding experts and representatives that might work out some form of accommodation would seem a logistical nightmare. The prolonged and agonizing legal debates involved in entrenchment would probably lead to the kinds of constitutional "fatigue" Canadians are all too familiar with. When needed, the political energy and good will required to amend the statutes

pertaining to individual versus collective rights would be hard to find.

Even if consensus could be reached, it is unsure whether any form of legislation could guarantee that the beliefs and practices that form identity remain intact. Habermas (1994) persuasively argues that the constitutional safeguarding of cultural forms and collective rights, as proposed by Taylor, would be both unnecessary and cumbersome. In his words, "the protection of forms of life and traditions in which identities are formed is supposed to serve the recognition of their members; it does not represent a kind of preservation of species by administrative means" (p. 130). By this, Habermas does not mean to suggest that liberal democratic governments abstain from acting to assist minority groups. Rather, his key point (similar to Foucault's perspective) is that the putative impartiality of legal and administrative systems generates its own effects that counteract the underlying reasons for the entrenchment of minority rights in the first place. More importantly, and as I noted above, the discourse of the law then inhibits minority groups from "appropriating" and "preserving" those aspects of their own cultural heritage that they deem most desirable for their future life chances within the dominant society.

Cultural heritages and the forms of life articulated in them normally reproduce themselves by convincing those whose personality structures they shape ... The constitutional state can make this hermeneutic achievement of the cultural reproduction of lifeworlds possible, but it cannot guarantee it. For to guarantee survival would necessarily rob the members of the very freedom to say yes or no that is necessary if they

are to appropriate and preserve their cultural heritage.
(Habermas, 1994, p. 130)

As Habermas notes, and Foucault would strongly agree, the means by which cultures and minority groups reproduce themselves is a "hermeneutic achievement." The forms and direction that this process of *interpretation* takes will always be intertextual, influenced by the past and present discourses in which members of minority groups participate. Without seriously consulting the accounts of the social actors involved (Cf. "critical realism," Corson, 1993, 1997, in press), or by subordinating their interpretations to the "wording" of pre-existing legal documents, governments can only guess at which practices, in the self-understanding of minority groups, are "fundamental" to their collective needs in a multicultural, multiracial society. Moreover, successive governments will continue to make such "guesses" framed by the larger political agendas in which they operate, be it multiculturalism as a foil to bilingualism or as a strategy for global economic competitiveness.

In short, it might be too much to expect that the ongoing challenges of multiculturalism can be adequately addressed within the normative parameters (and ethnocentricisms) of the British legal and parliamentary systems. In this regard, Taylor's text serves the invaluable function of clarifying the extent and terms under which such an accommodation might be made in Canada. Nonetheless, if we take seriously the proposition that multiculturalism is not just a means of integration into the mainstream but also a means of transforming the same, as Taylor argues, then we might need to

explore radically new approaches to public consultation and participatory democracy.

On a basic and obvious level, Canada's current "first past the post" form of electing representatives continues to misrepresent the increasing diversity of our society. Electoral reform which would include some form of proportional representation would increase the possibility that minority voices would be heard in the forums that public decisions are made. Another area worth pursuing would be greater devolution of decision-making powers in areas of education and language policy. It is at the community level, where decisions regarding L1 maintenance or English only policies are best decided, granted that the stake-holders involved are fairly appraised of the potential (dis)advantages for academic and public life that may result (Corson, in press). Of course, the realization of such policies, would require the goodwill of those in positions of power to relinquish some of their powers in the pursuit of the common good -- never an easy proposition.

8.3 COMMUNITY-BASED ESL PROGRAMS: WHAT MIGHT BE DONE?

To my mind, and in support of my own self-interests as a teacher, the field of education would seem to be one of the most crucial areas of public life available to Canadians to ameliorate the sectarian pressures that can emerge in multicultural societies when the "politics of recognition" (Taylor, 1994) become too divisive. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the ESL classroom is one of

the few places in our society where diverse, minority accounts of Canadian life are voiced and exchanged. It is also one of the few public places where areas of mutual interest and compromise can be discussed and evaluated. In this thesis, I have tried to demonstrate a number of ways in which such social concerns can become central to L2 curricula without sacrificing ESL's traditional fields of expertise. Continuing in this direction, I have one final point to raise in support of community-based ESL pedagogies and the supportive role they might make in the area of multicultural understanding.

ESL programs at community agencies such as CSSAT are very much an extension of Canadian multiculturalism and language policy. The services they provide and the funding they receive reflect a society which admittedly can be ambivalent and sometimes hostile to newcomers (e.g. the head tax for Chinese immigrants), but generally accepts principles of cultural pluralism and the perpetuation of minority linguistic communities (see Williams, 1998, p. 27; Ricento, 1998, pp. 328-329). Newcomers who need help in their first language or seek the guidance of others who share similar beliefs and practices come to settlement agencies such as CSSAT and receive their introduction to Canadian society through the various programs offered. Clearly, community-based ESL programs have helped many newcomers integrate into Canadian society while maintaining a strong tie to past beliefs and values they hold dear. As our lessons on the Quebec referendum at CSSAT indicate, the process of integration and public participation is one of identity negotiation. Each new insight or critique of Canadian life brings about a (re)assessment of

the past and the subsequent selection and/or modification of "traditions" deemed more relevant for the future.

Along with my strong endorsement of community-based ESL programs, however, I am still troubled by the observations Tarak Fatah made in regards to the Markham dispute discussed earlier in this chapter. The key issue that he raises -- "there is no effort on the part of each community to get together, so each thinks that when they sort out their issues with the mainstream, their problems are over" (Swainson, 1999, pp. B1, B5) -- has important implications for community-based ESL pedagogies. CSSAT, and many other community agencies like it, are characteristic of what Burnaby (1988) defines as "ethnic" agencies, "run by members of a specific ethnic group for the benefit of others from that same group" (p. 29). As noted in chapter four, ethnic agencies have been most successful in offering specialized language and citizenship services specifically catered to those whose specific cultural, educational, and gendered backgrounds were not addressed by more conventional educational institutions (see Auerbach & McGrail, 1991; Burnaby, 1998; Cumming & Gill, 1992; Merson-Calderon, 1997; Morgan, 1998).

In such programs, it is easy for both agency workers and ESL teachers to become entirely focussed on *one* minority group and its particular ways of interacting (i.e. linguistically, historically, and politically) with the dominant society. Instead of multicultural awareness -- an attempt to understand "others" and to define common purposes and needs -- the result can become more of a self-absorbed "biculturalism": What does this mean for us? What demands can and should we make? What can we offer the

mainstream? As I have argued, similar to Williams (1998, pp. 25-26), such a perspective can lead towards a more "assertive multiculturalism", in which demands for recognition become competitions between minority groups preoccupied with advancing their own interests whenever institutional opportunities emerge.

I cannot imagine how we might legislate against such developments. But I do feel that community agencies, especially ones that have a high degree of sociocultural homogeneity, should make more of an effort to learn about other minorities struggling to have their issues heard and needs met by the mainstream. In ESL programs that take place in these agencies, more time could be devoted to introducing the histories and L1 practices of minority groups with whom students are unfamiliar. Guest speakers could be brought in and field trips to their respective communities organized. These might seem like small things when placed beside the complex issues that concern legal experts and politicians. But in the end, I would restate the opinion, along with Foucault and Habermas, that our identities/subjectivities as immigrants, minorities, or as citizens, for example, cannot be regulated or predicted through legislation. Invariably, it is through the micro-contexts and intersubjective meanings produced in ESL programs like CSSAT, where the final assessment of government policy is realized.

8.4 FINAL THOUGHTS

In this last chapter, it has been my goal to map out a dimension of critical practice no less consequential than the micro-interactions and methodological decisions that take place in the classroom. It is

important to remember that the negative and unanticipated consequences of ESL specialization in syllabus design (Cf. "generic" ESL programs; Burnaby, 1988) precipitated the need for community-based ESL programming in the first place. Moreover, it was as a consequence of Canadian multicultural policies that existing settlement agencies, which the government helped create and actively supported, were able to compensate for the inadequacies of ESL curricula largely dissociated from the social, cultural and political contexts of students' lives. So, we should not lose sight of the broader determining forces and discourses that shape our pedagogy. Nor should we forget that these discourses, in turn, are (re)produced through the micro-interactions of daily life and the types of meaning-making activities that take place in ESL classrooms.

While some might feel that I have strayed too far from the "basics" in ESL, I view my excursions into the disciplinary "unknown" as a means of reinvestigating the basic premises that have and continue to shape my profession. In this thesis, and in the arguments put forward in the final chapter, I am not implying that we have to choose between language and society -- or between linguistics and cognitive science, on the one hand, and the social sciences and postmodern discourses, on the other. All of these perspectives (and the plurality of theories that enrich their aggregation) are mutually informing for community-based ESL pedagogies. Certainly, the integration of discourses and practices I have outlined are intended to make us, as ESL professionals, more *socially* aware. But they also make us more *linguistically* aware, able to conceptualize language skills, tasks, methods and theories in ways more directly relevant to

the lives of our students. We should never lose sight of the fact that the boundaries of inquiry in our profession are self-imposed and not a reflection of any preordained reality. And at a time when many of us feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of published materials and professional demands on our lives, it is important for our students and ourselves that we not become too isolated within increasingly refined areas of specialization.

That a reinvestigation of ESL would take place around a detailed case study of a unique classroom, community-based ESL program (CSSAT), and historical event (Quebec's referendum), has been intentional. Although many inspiring texts have, to date, established the presence of a "critical applied linguistics", or "critical ESL pedagogy", my sense is that a different stage and focus of transformative work is now called for, reflecting both the particularities of language education and contextualizing the invaluable contributions of those who have explored critical perspectives in the past. In short, more grounded or "situated" accounts of critical ESL practices are required. To this end, the most important quality to cultivate for community ESL pedagogies might well be a critical imagination, a willingness to explore new connections and hybrid practices based on the circumstances of our work and irrespective of the "incompatibilities" presupposed by theory.

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