Spring 2001

Language and Power in the ESL Classroom

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LANGUAGE AND POWER IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

by

Bonnie Jo Bustrum

MASTERS THESIS
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty of the School of Education
At Grand Valley State University
In partial fulfillment of the
Degree of Master of Education
Spring 2001
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the research, development, and writing of this thesis, I am indebted to Dr. Kathryn Remlinger of the English Department of Grand Valley State University. Her knowledge of sociolinguistics, expertise in ethnography, and affirmation in my fledgling endeavor to become a teacher-researcher have been invaluable. As in her classroom practice, she followed an empowerment model of teaching during this study as she genuinely valued my perspectives, graciously affirmed my efforts and progress, and encouraged me to strive for excellence. I have appreciated Dr. Remlinger's company on the arduous yet rewarding path toward the completion of this thesis.

I am also grateful to my husband, Dr. Philip Bustrum, for his advice, encouragement when the way seemed discouraging, and belief in me that I could produce my own masterpiece. His acceptance, affirmation, and confidence in me have accompanied me throughout our life journey together.

Bonnie Jo Bustrum
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ABSTRACT

Because of limited English proficiency and sociocultural knowledge, adult ESL students may be disadvantaged in determining, evaluating, and responding to American cultural demonstrations of power and authority through speech choices and nonverbal cues. As a first step toward a pedagogy that addresses this sociolinguistic need, this ethnography investigates aspects of power and language in the teacher-student relationship in the home countries of twenty-two adult ESL students. Student responses are analyzed and compared, and a pedagogical framework is proposed which may foster ESL students’ linguistic and social development toward greater access to information and a more informed process of enculturation into American society.
CHAPTER ONE: THESIS PROPOSAL

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Because of lack of English language proficiency, immigrants and refugees seeking safe harbor and a fresh beginning in the United States are often disadvantaged in determining, evaluating, and responding to American cultural demonstrations of power and authority through speech choices and non-verbal cues. Many of these new residents are currently seeking to learn English and to adapt to American culture through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Students in my advanced-level ESL classes in the Adult and Community Education (ACE) department of Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) have voiced frustration in their social interaction with typical power holders in American society such as teachers, doctors, employers, merchants, and police officers. They commonly express a feeling of intimidation as they attempt to express ideas, feelings, and needs through their newly acquired and imperfect English language ability. They are painfully aware of their frequent hesitations while searching for English lexical items, their repetitions and rephrases as they attempt to clarify thoughts and ideas, and their foreign accent which so poignantly sets them apart from mainstream American English speakers. As an ESL classroom teacher as well as a former learner of a second language in a foreign country, I identify and empathize with my students.

Students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds (Hispanic, Eastern European, Asian, and African) express concern about their uncertainty, fear, and lack
of control in social situations involving people in socially powerful positions. From the limited perspective of my classroom, I sense that students from Asian and African cultures may be especially affected by sociolinguistic demonstrations of authority. For example, a highly educated Korean student currently enrolled in the GRPS ESL program communicated to me that she and her husband feel the sting of prejudice at their son's elementary school when they participate in school activities. "I know the principal saw me because his eyes met mine, and he was walking toward me," she said. "Then, when I said 'Hi' he acted like he wasn't seeing me and hearing me. He turned quickly and started talking to other parents. Why doesn't he want to talk to me and my husband? Are our faces so different? Does he think we can't speak English?" This student and her husband remain uncertain about the cause of the discrimination they felt. They feel unable to go to the principal because they sense a power distance between themselves and the school staff but do not have the ability to build a bridge of understanding and competence for successful interaction. Consequently, they unfailingly place the blame upon themselves for their inability to socially interact with their son's teachers and principal.

Fairclough (1989), a leading researcher in language and power, sees "language as a form of social practice" (p. 22) in that it demonstrates the identities of people as they interact in social settings for specific purposes. He claims that every language interaction is determined by social constraints such as our worldview, life experiences, ethics, attitudes, and assumptions about our existence in society. Power is seen as inherent in the social role of powerful individuals and is demonstrated
through their language use in society (i.e., teachers, lawyers, and doctors) as part of a "common sense" interpretation of the world. This authoritative control determines lexical choices and meaning, structure of discourse in situational settings, and social definition of position in society. As discourse patterns become a logical and natural part of worldview, a matrix is formed that keeps weaker groups of people (students, patients, ethnic minorities, and women) subject to the ideology of the powerful, (Gaventa, 1980; Fairclough, 1989; van Dyke, 1993; Hodge & Kress, 1993).

Further, Fairclough (1989) maintains that the command and speaking of standard English is, in itself, not a true national language belonging to all speakers. Rather, it is associated with the dominant class of business and education professionals who "make most use of it, and gain most from it as an asset" (p. 58). In this respect, Fairclough (1989) echoes the work of Pierre Bourdieu who sees language as a form of "cultural capital" analogous to capital in the economic sense, (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1991).

Van Dyke (1993) maintains that a change of this tenacious hold on cultural capital can only be realized through the study of "power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice" in order to assess the "intricate relationship between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" (pp. 252-253).

As an ESL classroom teacher, I propose that immigrants and refugees who are ESL students may not adequately understand the social organization which enables powerful individuals to control others in society. They may be further marginalized
because of their lack of understanding and production of English language discourse structures such as hesitations, hedges, pauses, interruptions, laughter, and forms of address as well as linguistic features such as “intonation, lexical or syntactic style, rhetorical figures, local semantic structures, turn-taking strategies, politeness phenomena, and so on” because “understanding and explaining ‘power-relevant’ discourse structures involves reconstruction of the social and cognitive processes of their production” (Van Dyke, 1993, p. 259 & 261). Because of the additional burdens of foreign accent and unfamiliarity with standard English structure and idiomatic expressions, immigrants and refugees may have more limited access to cultural capital than Americans of disadvantaged social status such as native-born minorities, women, and the poor (Lippi-Green, 1997).

Currently no known ESL curriculum in the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) system specifically responds to this sociolinguistic need. A multicultural investigation of the language and power dynamic should, therefore, be undertaken in order to help teachers as they foster the development of language and cultural abilities in their ESL students. Cohen (1996) sees the goal of the ESL classroom as providing students with both “sociolinguistic ability” and “sociocultural ability” (p. 388). Students must be equipped to discern what types of linguistic forms (actual language such as “excuse me” or “sorry” used for complaints, apologies, and requests) are necessary in formal and informal situations. Equally important, immigrants must learn what language strategies (apologies, explanations, requests, promises) are most appropriate for American social situations where age, sex, occupation, role, and social
class are involved, especially where these procedures may differ from their native cultural approach.

IMPORTANCE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

While ESL teachers do an admirable job of teaching their students the structure and grammar of English and the basic culture of American society, the sociolinguistic and sociocultural development of students is often not emphasized in ESL curriculum. Chick (1996) suggests that

if sociolinguists wish their studies of intercultural communication to be used for emancipatory rather than hegemonic purposes, they need to emphasize, more than they have tended to do in the past, the relationships between sociolinguistic conventions and the social order (especially social relations of power), and how each serves to maintain or change the other (p. 343).

Because of the lack of specific instruction concerning language and social roles, ESL students may inadvertently misunderstand the cultural demonstrations of the dominant culture, especially in relationships with socially powerful people, and may miscommunicate as they interact linguistically and socially.

Fairclough (1989) contends that many societal contexts would benefit from a critical study of language and power but none more urgently than second language learners. He says

Teachers of ESL are dealing with some of the most disadvantaged sections of the society, whose experiences of domination and racism are particularly sharp. Some of these teachers already see their role in terms of empowering their students, in the words of one practitioner, to “deal with communicative situations outside the classroom in which institutional power is weighted against them, preparing them to
challenge, contradict, assert, in settings where the power dynamic would expect them to agree, acquiesce, be silent” (p. 235).

Chick (1996) reminds us that “sociolinguists have traced the sources of intercultural miscommunication to the distinctive nature of the value systems, pervasive configurations of social relations, and dominant ideologies of cultural groups” (p. 329). Chick’s definition of the term, “sociolinguistic transfer” is appropriate in relation to ESL students interacting in American culture. Chick believes that as two cultures intersect, conversational participants may inadvertently transfer the acquired rules of speaking and interacting in their own culture to their new cultural setting. Thus, as ESL students begin to learn and use English in the context of American culture, they often experience confusion over unfamiliar cultural patterns, linguistic features, and non-verbal communicative language such as proxemics, paralanguage, and kinesetics.

Current ESL curriculum in GRPS does not specifically address the issue of verbal and non-verbal demonstrations of powerful language in social situations and does not typically seek to assist ESL students to metacognitively explore the dynamics of this vital segment of communicative competence. The need exists to research power and language demonstrations from a cross-cultural position and to foster awareness of this perspective in ESL teachers for the purpose of formulating a strategy that would implement the direct teaching of this sociolinguistic aspect of behavior.
Most ESL students will interact socially with powerful elites in American society and will customarily experience assymetrical power relationships with teachers, doctors, civil authorities, employers and merchants. Incorporating both sociolinguistic and sociocultural components into classroom pedagogy will enhance the learning of language and culture, affirm the home cultures and ideologies of ESL students, and foster cultural adaptation.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Several previous studies direct the development of this thesis. First, sociolinguistic theories of how language, society, and power intersect form a foundational platform upon which to base empirical research. Second, ethnographic investigations that incorporate language elements guide the investigation of the cultures represented by students in ESL classes in Grand Rapids Public Schools. Third, research conducted in educational settings focus attention on the teacher/student relationship as well as the students’ larger cultural context in society. Fourth, the principles of ethnographic research guide the study of culture and the interview process of second language learners. Each of these approaches are examined in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this ethnography is to conduct a study of language and power from current ESL students’ perspectives of typical teacher-student interaction in their
home countries. My study has the following goals: 1) To provide teachers in the ESL department of GRPS with applicable, initial data on identifiable patterns of linguistic power in the home cultures of current ESL students; 2) To use this data to compare and contrast the socio-cultural and speech choice components of authority figures in typical western culture with student cultures; 3) To compare cultural demonstrations of power and language in guiding students to think critically about various social situations and implications of powerful language in American society so that students will have more equal access to information in social interaction; 4) To prepare suggestions that will be presented to ESL teachers in GRPS for sociolinguistic and sociocultural resources and databases that are pertinent to the topic of power and language from a multicultural perspective; and, 5) To share possible classroom teaching strategies discovered through this thesis investigation with ESL teachers in GRPS Adult Education Department during an inservice meeting in May 2001.

For the purpose of this study and for the data that are gleaned through student interviews, the phrase, *typical teacher-student interaction* will be limited to classroom settings and other social situations in which teachers and students are likely to interact, such as after-school clubs, field trips, class parties, and chance meetings in public places. It is assumed that if students are able to interact successfully in school with teachers as role models of sociolinguistic power, students may be able to favorably interact socially and linguistically with other powerful people (employers, doctors, and police) in the larger society.
LIMITATIONS OF THE THESIS

I have limited the focus of this thesis to the study of the sociolinguistic asymmetrical relationship between teachers and students in the classroom. Although this thesis will not include an in-depth investigation into other areas of asymmetrical power relationships such as employer/employee, doctor/patient, merchant/consumer, and civil authority/citizen, students who are interviewed are asked about these domains as they relate to the structure of their society. For example, students are asked to place the status of a teacher in society in relation to other socially powerful career positions.

Immigrants and refugees from a variety of home cultures are interviewed to provide data for the thesis investigation. In addition, these ESL students are selected from those cultures that are most recognized by current student enrollment. It is acknowledged that the data gathered from this research is limited by several factors. First, restrictive time constraints do not allow a complete investigation of all immigrants and refugees in the current ESL environment, thereby excluding some potentially useful data from home countries not represented in the interview process. Second, these same time factors preclude repeated, in-depth ethnographic inquiries of each student interviewed to confirm intention and meaning during interview dialogue. Third, this thesis seeks to elicit unbiased and natural responses concerning teacher/student relationships in a seemingly paradoxical situation in which the interviewer is a teacher in a position of power and the interviewee is a student in a position of limited power. Sociolinguists refer to such interview situations in which
assymetrical relations exists as the phenomenon of the “observer’s paradox” (Labov, 1972). Fourth, rather than being able to observe contemporary teacher/student behavior in a controlled academic setting, I am asking adult ESL students to recall situations of power and powerful language forms from their past experiences in schools in their home countries. For most of these adult students, distant memory serves as an influential guide. Finally, there is always a risk during teacher/student interaction of students choosing to respond in a manner consistent with perceived teacher expectation rather than honest, student recall and cognition.

**SUMMARY**

This thesis explores issues of language and power in teacher-student relationships from a multicultural perspective. A literature review of pertinent sources on the topic of power and language is described in Chapter Two. The study involving the interview data described in Chapter Three is presented in both narrative style and chart presentations. Conclusions are integrated with the literature review, the actual collected data, and the recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of literature pertaining to power and language constructs. The entries are classified and discussed according to general topics germane to the current study of language and power issues in the ESL context. The following framework is used to discuss three theoretical approaches: 1) **Sociolinguistic Approaches to Language and Power** illuminates general concepts of language and power demonstrations in society. 2) **Multicultural Approaches to Language and Power** provides insights into culturally diverse language and power demonstrations. 3) **Pedagogical Approaches to Language and Power** highlights classroom interaction and suggestions for responsible pedagogy.

**SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE AND POWER**

This section reviews social and critical linguistic theories as they relate to the interaction of knowledge, power, and language use in society. Social theorists such as Bourdieu and Foucault lend invaluable foundations for reviewing the work of critical linguists such as Fairclough, who sees language as a scene of battle for social control in capitalist society, and Van Dyke, who seeks to understand social dominance and inequality through discourse analysis. Central to the focus of this thesis is Foucault's belief that power and resistance co-exist and are at work in every social relationship. Recent researchers such as Reid and Ng embrace Foucault's
notion and suggest that the resistance of the weak, an essential part of the battle, can usher in emancipation from social domination. This discussion will help to delineate ways in which such liberation may take place.

Fairclough (1989) believes that people produce language and construe meaning from language according to a template, which reproduces social meaning based on ideological assumptions which “sustain and legitimize existing relations of power” (p. 40). He also notes that social class distinctions influence and reproduce discourse. Fairclough uses the teacher-student relationship to explain this concept:

In terms of reproduction, we can say that, for example, the teacher-pupil relations, and the teacher and pupil positions, embedded in educational discourse types are directly reproduced in educational discourse, while the same discourse indirectly reproduces class relations. The general point is that education, along with all the other social institutions, has as its ‘hidden agenda’ the reproduction of class relations and other higher-level social structures, in addition to its overt educational agenda (p 40).

Van Dyke (1993) defines such socially powerful individuals as “elites” whose role and talk in society demonstrate dominance over non-elites. He maintains that this dominance is

the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that result in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality. This reproduction process may involve such different ‘modes’ of discourse-power relations as the more or less direct or overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance (p. 250).

Van Dyke (1993) believes that the power of elites to dominate “is based on privileged access to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge” (p. 254). Power, he
believes, implies control by one person or group over another through “*action* and *cognition:* that is, a powerful group may limit the freedom of action of others, but also influence their minds” (p. 254) through speech that is seen as legitimate and natural. Thus, social role is a critical factor in the discourse between powerful (or “elite”) and powerless (or “non-elite”) speakers whose power and dominance is generally organized and institutionalized through schools, courts, and professional group ideologies which mirror the organization of the society in which they live (Van Dyke, 1993; Wodak, 1996; Thomas & Wareing, 1999).

Through such organization, elites maintain control over non-elites in areas of interaction context, group membership, and discourse structures. For example, doctors and teachers normally control the context of discourse by making appointments and structuring the classroom learning environment. Group membership principles may dictate that women, minorities, and those who would advocate for them are excluded from venues such as immigration interviews in which immigration officers restrict lawyers and social workers from attendance and participation. Discourse structures such as “the presence or absence of hedges, hesitations, pauses, laughter, interruptions, doubt or certainty markers, specific lexical items, forms of address, and pronoun use” may be unknown or underemployed by those who are unfamiliar with societal structure (Van Dyke, 1993, p. 260-261).

Van Dyke (1993) notes a connection between social power and discourse access to different genres of linguistic interaction. For example, “most ‘ordinary’ people only have active access to conversations with family members, friends or
colleagues. They have more or less passive access to bureaucrats in public agencies or to professionals (e.g. doctors, teachers, and police officers)” (p. 256). Because immigrants and refugees usually arrive in American society without personal connections to educators, business organizations, the press, and other influential, decision-making individuals, they typify those who would have limited access to discourse genre and strategy.

As elites and non-elites develop sociolinguistic relationships in society, the critical factor of socioeconomics emerges and helps to define interaction. Fairclough’s treatment of such contact stems from his Marxist view of society and its struggle to undermine dominance as it demonstrates the way in which people define and redefine their place in society. As part of his definition of language as a class struggle in society, Fairclough (1989) contends that power emanates from the practice of capitalism as it controls, either overtly or indirectly, wealth, services, and goods in areas of education, professional care, and religion. Power is seen both behind the language in the form of social roles and demonstrated through the language of power holders such as teachers, lawyers, and doctors. This linguistic constitution of power is part of a “common sense” interpretation of the world, first espoused by Gramsci (1989) as the “uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in any given epoch” (p. 322). This matrix of interpretation with its pervasive authoritarian control determines speakers’ lexical choices and meaning, the structure of discourse in situational settings, and the social definition of their place in society. As discourse patterns
become a logical and natural part of a person's worldview, a pattern is formed that keeps powerless classes of people (students, patients, and marginalized people groups such as ethnic minorities and women) subject to the ideology of the powerful. Fairclough (1989) claims that this "naturalization . . . is the most formidable weapon in the armoury of power" (p. 106).

Such naturalization, symbolic influence, and control of the powerful over the powerless is often seen as the only conceivable way to organize the world. It is argued that units of organization, from the family to business and world government, need someone to lead and teach and someone to work and learn. While this general idea can be supported as legitimate, power is rarely seen as negotiable and shared. Fairclough (1989) believes that the dominant class in society is able to use language as a hidden power commodity with "legitimizes existing social relations" and allows "rule by consent as opposed to coercion" (p. 36). Similarly, Ng and Bradac (1993) declare that power holders often camouflage their influence messages because of their desire to manipulate and control. "In doing so, communicators render their influence attempts more palatable to the targets of influence and at the same time lessen their own accountability" (p. 7). Power holders are able to subtly dominate or to even mislead by using language conventions that "are made possible by, among other things, the flexibility of syntax, the potential of semantically loaded words to evoke images, and the availability of cultural conventions that enable communicators to convey or infer meaning indirectly" (p. 8).
Fairclough (1989) sees this social struggle involving the maintenance or change of position among powerful and powerless individuals as a "necessary and inherent property" of any social system which depends upon the power of one class to exploit another (p. 35). He sees language as a pivotal arena where such conflict exists and says that "language is both a site of and a stake in class struggle, and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend (or lose) their position" (p. 35).

In his investigations of symbolic power, Bourdieu (1977, 1991) sees a system of strategies that develop within the structure of society which produce a form of capitalism. These symbolic systems are regulated by groups of specialists who create and use language to produce and maintain social power. Bourdieu (1991) believes that the discourse of these specialists effectively creates a hierarchy where language can be seen as cultural capital. He states,

There is no clearer demonstration of this effect of the field than that sort of esoteric culture, comprised of problems that are completely alien or inaccessible to ordinary people, of concepts and discourses that are without referents in the experience of ordinary citizens and, especially, of distinctions, nuances, subtleties and niceties that pass unnoticed by the uninitiated and which have no raison de'être other than the relations of conflict or competition between the different organizations or between the "tendencies" and "trends" of one and the same organization (p. 184).

Van Dyke (1993) sees the source of this power based on "privileged access to discourse and communication" where "language users or communicators have more or less freedom in the use of special discourse genres or styles, or in the participation in specific communicative events and contexts" (p. 255-256). Further, Fairclough
(1989) reminds us that access to discourse types is seen in the same light as tangible goods such as jobs, wealth, and housing. He says, "The dominant bloc (the capitalist class, the ‘middle class’, the professions) have substantially more of them than members of the working class—they are richer in cultural capital (p. 63). Thus, as individuals gain access to such discourse and communicative genres as newspapers and editors, political documents and representatives, business reports and interactions, and public agencies and professionals (such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and civil authorities), they gain social and linguistic power as well. Cultural capital accumulation is then realized in society through powerful discourse.

In their work describing powerful and powerless styles of speech, Ng and Bradac (1993) find that these speech practices correlate with the social position and power of speakers. Powerless forms of language such as hedges, intensifiers, tag questions, hesitations, deictic phrases, and polite forms are consistently observed in those of low social status and conspicuously missing from those in prominent positions in society. Thus, through the ideology of the social matrix, the powerful and the powerless continually demonstrate their positions through their choice of language forms. Of particular interest to Western cultures is the fact that “people are attracted to powerful others” and that speakers of powerful discourse in society are rewarded with a perception of “competence, confidence, intelligence, powerfulness, and knowledgeability” (p. 27). In contrast, “the ultimately powerless speaker exhibits nonstandard accent or dialect, high hesitancy, many hedges, much repetition, and a slow rate of speech” (p. 47).
As powerful and powerless speakers interact, a struggle begins to emerge between speakers. Ng and Bradac (1993) give insight concerning this transaction and the eventual perceptions that are gleaned. They state,

Uncertainty reduction theory, originally formulated by Berger and Calabrese (1975), suggest that the primary social drive in humans is the reduction of uncertainty about other humans. Humans want to be able to predict how others will behave and what they will think in many situations (p. 54).

Even more important to linguistic expressions of powerful speech is the “language expectancy theory” (Burgoon & Miller, 1985; Burgoon, 1990; Ng & Bradac, 1993) which “suggests that hearers expect powerful individuals to use powerful language” (Ng & Bradac, 1993, p. 55). The forces at work in powerful communication forms and the hearer’s own expectations based on the speaker’s social identity combine to create a message that may, tragically, woo a person into acceptance or passivity even when the message conflicts with personal interpretation. Ng and Bradac (1993) state,

In some situations, probably most typically situations with a strong social-interpersonal component, individuals will respond to a communicator’s persuasive recommendation because the response is fitting, coherent, and socially appropriate and not because it makes sense in terms of what the message recipient believes about the world (p. 57).

An equally influential voice in the definition of power is that of Foucault (1980) who believes that seeing power as a possession of the state system reduces the potential of power to simple negation in which the role of the master must prohibit the freedom of the enslaved. Foucault offers a broader definition of power when he reflects that power is “always already there” and that it plays various roles in social
interaction as "procedures of power are adapted, re-inforced and transformed" through a multitude of relationships involving domination and submission (pp. 141-142). For Foucault (1988) fundamental questions must be asked about the strategies which are used to express power:

Who makes decisions for me? Who is preventing me from doing this and telling me to do that? How are these decisions on which my life is completely articulated taken? I don't believe that this question of 'who exercises power?' can be resolved unless that other question 'how does it happen?' is resolved at the same time (p. 103).

As an example, Foucault (1980) envisions a monarch who, through demonstrations of violence, is able to eventually control his subject through a simple gaze that reminds the powerless of his ability to punish. Such a strategy will lead to an internalization of power in which the subject becomes "his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself" (p. 155).

Thus, in analyzing power, Foucault (1980) sees the work of power as systemic and as part of the social system where each element, ideology, and social practice find expression through mechanisms, strategies, networks, and structures. In addition, he believes "that there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (p. 142). For Foucault (1980, 1988) power and resistance co-exist, have multiple strategies and manifestations, and can be best be categorized as knowledge which can be used to alter social constraints.

As individuals seek to predict how others will define themselves in society and as they begin to understand that resistance is part of the power dynamic, social
relationships are negotiated between elites and non-elites. In a recent study, Reid and Ng (1999) see four observable relationships between language and power; language can reflect, create, hide, and legitimate power. While acknowledging that language reflects and reproduces the power and status of social groups and is specific to the context of discourse (Reid & Ng, 1999; Fairclough, 1989; Giddens, 1984), these researchers believe that language is also able to create power and usher dynamic change into situational social discourse. Understanding the conventional view that powerless language is traditionally linked to the low social status of women, ethnic minorities, and the working class, Reid and Ng (1999) suggest that the initial use of low-power linguistic strategies can be used in specific contexts to enhance and equalize the power dynamics of discourse. The researchers maintain that in social discourse, conversants tend to expect certain language forms from particular social positions and will thus react accordingly. In this respect, they echo Foucault's (1980) position that discourse is seen as an inherent part of the rules of a social system.

As an illustration of how this dynamic unfolds, Reid and Ng's (1999) empirical studies suggest that by using the discourse style most typically associated with their social roles, powerless speakers can create conversational power situations. They believe that "it is the ability to gain conversational turns, rather than power of style, that is responsible for achieving high influence" (p. 125). Their investigations suggest that speakers who attempt interruptions using language most associated with their social status, are successful in gaining turns and thus, gaining influence in discourse. "People are accepting of words that confirm their beliefs about the
prototypical content of groups, and reject information that disconfirms their beliefs” (p. 126). As an example, the researchers suggest the following scenario.

Female speakers might use males' receptiveness to the low-power language style as a means of gaining a turn, but having gained a turn, they can establish conversational control through techniques that no longer rely on low-power language. For example, they may assert their agenda in such a way that would discourage others from interrupting: “I have three points to make, they are . . . .” They may use adjacency pairs, such as question-answer and offer-reply, to constrain the next speaker to a particular form of response. Further, they may address a specific other person, and involve this person in a sequence of turns so as to exclude unwanted third parties from the conversation. This would allow control over the content and direction of conversation, which may be used to advance a personal or group agenda (p. 127).

Reid and Ng (1999) also offer hope that uncovering the language techniques which mislead or subtly dominate those in powerless positions might be used to change the dynamics of social control. They cite the use of stereotypes as particularly useful by elites “in acting out power and then legitimating and obscuring its use” (p. 127). Social influence is gained when categories are established and powerless groups such as ethnic minorities are seen, not as individuals, but as “outgroups.” Reid and Ng (1999) suggest that minorities may also use this same strategy to “categorize themselves as a distinctive subgroup with special needs . . . . and to appeal to a superordinate categorization” that depicts them “as people with a special interest” (p. 130). Reid and Ng conclude, “Both the powerful and the powerless need stereotyping processes, they are necessary to both social change and maintenance” (p. 131). These researchers urge us to consider that “power is not always a given; most often it is argued over, created, and re-created through language” (p. 134).
Although powerful verbal language is more often seen as pivotal in maintaining and changing social dynamics, the aspect of nonverbal language is also a factor in creating and recreating sociolinguistic relationships. Burgoon, Johnson, & Koch (1998) see power demonstrated through social roles as language is used with such non-verbal indicators as proximity, posture, facial expression, eye contact, forceful gaze, and incremental voice volume. Researchers Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce's (1998) work on power and non-verbal language utilizes the model French and Raven proposed in 1959 to describe the sources, or bases, of power from which people can be influenced: “Reward power” (the ability to give) “coercive power” (the ability to punish), “legitimate power” (the ability to influence), “referent power” (the need of the referent to identify with the speaker), and “expert power” (the ability to provide information). Aguinis, et al. (1998) add a sixth power base, “Credibility,” (accuracy and truthfulness) to develop the picture of possible venues for social domination. They researched the connection between power perceptions and nonverbal language because they believe “that there has been a noticeable increase in studies of nonverbal behavior as a means of establishing and communicating power relationships” (p. 456). Using vignettes of discourse between two actors in a business situation, the researchers manipulated specific nonverbal behaviors like facial expression (nervous/relaxed), visual behavior (direct/indirect eye contact), and body posture (formal/informal). Undergraduate college students were asked to evaluate one actor's power in this situational setting and data were gathered for analysis. Most important in the findings were the effects that facial expression has on the impression
of power. The facial expression variable (nervous/relaxed) proved to be significant in five out of the six types of power (with no significance for coercive power). For example, the participant with relaxed facial expression was given higher ratings of reward, legitimate, expert, and credibility power. Body posture (formal/informal) had no effect on the perception of power, and eye contact (direct/indirect) proved to be significant only for the power base of “credibility.” The research suggests that social role and authority (employer, manager, supervisor, teacher) demonstrated in the five bases of power is of primary significance in recognizing authority and that “some non-verbal behaviors have a direct impact on how people attribute specific bases of power” especially as “additive effects on power perceptions” (p. 463).

In summary, language and social roles are interrelated in ways that often lead to unequal relationships in which power may be hidden, legitimized, and reproduced to benefit those in business, government, and education. Such power also may serve to marginalize those who do not have access to dominant language patterns used in communicative settings or to people in prominent positions of influence in society. While a cycle of domination and subjugation takes place as a seemingly natural product of social structure, a struggle is in progress to understand and oppose this unjust social condition and to devise more equal platforms for expression. Minority populations, especially those who enter the dominant society through immigration or refugee resettlement, may be especially vulnerable to linguistic and social domination as they struggle to learn a new language and interact in a different culture. Knowing how minority populations view language and social roles may give insight to those
who guide immigrants in the enculturation process. With this in mind, I offer the following discussion which explores a variety of cultural perspectives.

MULTICULTURAL APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE AND POWER

Language is a primary component in the process of cultural adaptation and homogenization. Cultural differences often prove to be a significant barrier as immigrants begin the process of integration and assimilation into the dominant American culture (Wright, 1998). This section in the literature review acknowledges that each person in language interaction is a product of his/her culture and his/her experiences within it. A critical awareness of how world cultures produce particular values and unique people is essential to understanding, affirming, and empowering students in interactional discourse. Researchers acknowledge that one cannot evaluate or definitively compare cultures because standards for judgment are individually designed within each cultural system (Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998; Shaul & Furbee, 1998; Wright, 1998). Learning the functions of language and social role in various cultures can, however, lead to appreciation, tolerance, and eventual acceptance of culturally defined differences. With this goal in mind, the following discussion describes some of the variables that influence the use of language and the impression of social power in personal interaction.

Conversational influence, control, constant redefinition, and continual renegotiation is undoubtedly challenging to members of the mainstream language group as elites and non-elites interact, but it may prove daunting for minority
language groups as they struggle to overcome linguistic, social and economic barriers. Of particular concern are those who immigrate to the United States or find refuge here from tragedy in their home countries.

Chick (1996) addresses the confusion and social effects experienced by minorities and non-native English speakers and maintains that a primary source of intercultural miscommunication is "sociolinguistic transfer" which "refers to the use of the rules of speaking of one's own speech community or cultural group when interacting with members of another community or group" (p. 332). Chick (1996) maintains that such cultural cues alert the interlocutors to the speech activity in which they are participating as well as their "social relationships . . . in that activity (professional-client, teacher-student, etc.)" (p. 339). He sees the consequences of intercultural miscommunication as grave for minority groups "whose jobs, social welfare, educational opportunities, and so on, depend vitally on successful communication with power holders" and believes that such miscommunication enhances discrimination and "inequity of the socioeconomic and political system" (p. 341).

Samovar, Porter, & Stefani (1998) argue that miscommunication and discrimination inherent in the intercultural communication process can be averted only through an informed perspective of each culture's approach to the perception and use of power dynamics. They contend that "it is not power that represents the potential communication problem, but the misuse of it" (p. 248). As diverse cultures meet in communicative interaction, participants hold unique and enigmatic pieces of
recognition and understanding of social and linguistic power. For example, while most North Americans value individual expression of social power, many Muslim cultures acknowledge that power dwells in fate, nature, or God rather than in their own lives. In addition, all cultures may be placed along a continuum that indicates the degree to which unequal power relationships are acknowledged and accepted (see Appendix A). For instance, certain Asian and Hispanic countries (India, Singapore, Philippines, Mexico) would be classified as “high-power-distance” cultures that “believe that power and authority are facts of life” (p. 71). Members of such societies are taught that social hierarchy is a realistic and functional picture of life. Generally, such cultures observe strict value systems, reverence for authority, and centralized power. In contrast, “low-power-distance” cultures (Israel, United States, and many northern European countries) believe that power distance should be minimized, access to power should be obtainable, and that hierarchy exists only for expedience. As cultures interact, Samovar, Porter & Stefani (1998) see the resulting struggle for mutual sociolinguistic and cultural understanding as a potential barrier to affirmation of individual credibility and positive influence in communication.

Compounding the complexity of sociolinguistic and cultural adjustment of immigrants and refugees to the United States is the interplay between the communication styles of high-context and low-context cultures. Shaul & Furbee (1998) define context as a blend of setting (time and place), medium (written vs. spoken messages), and status (social role of interlocutors). These crucial elements shape interaction by informing discourse participants of their social roles and by
giving cultural meaning and direction to conversation. Shaul & Furbee (1998) see the concept of context as the ultimate definition of any given culture as it identifies a "cultural code underlying actual behavior" (p. 138). Discourse, then, becomes an "intermediate between culture (models, beliefs, and the world in symbolic terms) and society (individuals organized into various groups who share rules for the use of symbol-oriented behavior)" (p. 165).

Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo (1995) add clarity to the concept of cultural "context" when they introduce the terms "micro context" to include setting (time and place) and medium (genre of communication) and "macro context" to express "relevant sociocultural relationships and institutions" (p. 61). They see levels of context as "concentric spheres of influence surrounding the events or behavior" which take place during social interaction (p. 61). A macro context analysis seems especially relevant when intercultural communication takes place because it examines behavior "in light of both the long-term history of relationships in the immediate setting and the relevant larger historical processes" in society and culture which shape interaction in significant ways through "socialization practices at home, at school, and in the community" in any given culture (p. 62).

Samovar, Porter & Stefani (1998) base their observations on the idea of "context" and see the categorization of communication styles as dependent on "the degree to which meaning comes from the settings or from the words exchanged" (p. 79). In this regard, they describe both "high-context cultures" and "low-context cultures" that are arranged on a continuum (see Appendix B). High-context cultures,
such as Latin American, Native American, and Asian, value the background and status of the speaker as the primary message of communication. The meaning or effect of the message is often delivered through gestures, status, family-background, title, non-verbal cues, context, and silence. For example,

the Korean language contains the word *nunchi*, which means being able to communicate with the eyes. In high-context cultures, so much information is available in the environment that it is unnecessary to verbalize everything. For instance, statements of affection, such as “I love you,” are rare because the message is conveyed by the context (p. 80).

In low-context societies, such as American and European, the message itself is the means of communication and tends to be “detailed, clear-cut and definite” (p. 81). For example, “If there are not enough data, or if the point being made is not apparent, members of these cultures will ask very blunt, even curt, questions. They feel uncomfortable with the vagueness and ambiguity often associated with limited data” (p. 81). Low-context messages filled with verbal data and encoded with direct and detailed force give the speech of socially powerful individuals in low-context societies additional authority.

Because American social references find meaning and expression within a low-context environment, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Asian immigrants who have sensitive face-saving strategies in place often encounter additional burdens in contexts of powerful speech from dominant social entities. To illustrate, Samovar, Porter & Stefani (1998) define “face-saving” in terms of the desired harmony high-context participants need in conversational interaction. Communicators in Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese cultures clearly value inter-personal respect, calmness, and
accord. For example, an investigation of Filipino culture by Gochenour (1990) demonstrates that “the ultimate ideal is one of harmony—between individuals, among the members of a family, among the groups and divisions of society, and of all life in relationship with God” (cited in Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998, p. 23).

In describing especially face-sensitive cultures, Conlan (1996) and Blum (1997) explore Japanese and Chinese cultural demonstrations of politeness, family and kinship terms, the use of pronouns, and proper names. Conlan (1996) argues that both American and Japanese societies are based on familial organization, yet each may be misunderstood by the other because of social rules inherent in their diverse systems. He suggests that

a culture’s predominant familial grouping plays a significant part in not only establishing the nature of the larger social reality which members of that culture mutually produce and inhabit, but also in defining for social actors what is and what is not appropriate social orientation in extra-familial social encounters (p. 735).

Japanese culture bases social relationships on the principles of *amae*, a term describing the feelings of a child for his/her mother, and *ie* and *uchi*, household terms used to define what is allowable to do and say. These parent-child and family relationships prove to be a model for the wider Japanese interactional society. For example, a business organization would be seen as a family with employers as members of the household and the employer as the father figure. This type of household consciousness and interaction in a public domain differs from the Western concepts of self-realization and individualism in the public marketplace. While American culture also constructs a public social garment from the basis of family
fabric, Americans typically minimize the importance of the group and employ a “culturally inscribed point of reference for the self and for the self’s social orientation towards others which, in turn, serves as a social blueprint for interaction with others” (Conlan, 1996, p. 735).

Blum (1997) explores this individualism and relates it to the linguistic interaction in Chinese culture. She notes that success in language interaction is not that it springs spontaneously from an emotion-filled, intention-driven, sincere individual, as might be presumed in the West, but that it demonstrates respect through willingness to be educated by others—often by rehearsal through verbatim routines, which function also as a sort of three-way negotiation of place in the hierarchy (p. 358).

In order to contrast the individualism in Western culture and the familial constraints of Chinese culture, Blum (1997) investigates the Chinese practice of naming and the use of kinship terms in sociolinguistic interaction which are central to the public life of Chinese citizens. Because blood relations are of utmost importance, kinship terms such as “brother,” “sister,” “grandmother,” “father,” “aunt,” and “uncle” are widely used to demonstrate respect to those outside the immediate family circle. In addition, the concept of “face” is addressed through the use of three conversational participants in contrast to the western customary pattern of two equal participants. For example,

For children, a parent—often a mother, but also possibly another caregiver—initiates the exchange. The child does her part, and the elder kinsperson receives the utterance as a kind of gift. Teachers similarly remind their young students to address visitors: *Ayi shushu zaijian!* ‘Goodbye, aunt(s) (ayi) and uncle(s) (shushu)!’ Here the contrast with a generalized Western linguistic ideology is sharp: the
intention or originality of an utterance is much less central than the mastery of a form through practice (p. 361).

In addition, while Americans traditionally hold their identity in their personal names, Blum (1997) notes that Chinese accept a variety of names for themselves depending on circumstance and “do not necessarily retain any of them as their “real” name or as the one that they feel reflects their identity” (p. 365). Also, while the use of pronouns in U. S. social interaction is seen as normative, substitution of proper or kinship names with pronouns is seen as “conveying the meaning of lack of respect; ultimately, one flatters by using a title in place of a pronoun” (p. 369). Blum summarizes her investigation by stating that

unlike Americans, who usually seek the most egalitarian forms of address (Professor Jones: Is it okay if I call you Linda?), Chinese usually seek to be told about their status relative to one another through the help of a mutual acquaintance, and they do so throughout their lives (p. 372).

Individuals from every culture find reference to certain face-sensitive values along a continuum between high and low context cultures. Even though the United States is considered a low-context culture, the issue of individual face-sensitivity is still an important factor in social relationships. In this regard, Roloff, Paulson, & Vollbrecht (1998) investigate powerful speech and speaker authority and offer a “language based perspective on coercive communication and face threats” (p. 140). Their investigations of employed Mid-Western undergraduate college students reveal that powerful phrases from employers using the modal auxiliary “will” produce more of a threat of punishment than phrases using disclaimers and modal auxiliaries such as “might” or “could.” However, according to the authors,
regardless of the type of coercive communication they use, authority figures are perceived to speak with a powerful voice. Thus, the target must look to the speaker’s coercive potential to infer what punishment, if any, might result from noncompliance. Due to their great coercive potential, an authority figure is able to dominate a less powerful target (p. 158).

Because of the juxtaposition of divergent non-native cultures and their interaction with the dominant U. S. culture, Nagel (1994) addresses the ways in which individuals and groups create and define themselves according to language, culture, ancestry, and appearance. She follows a social constructionist view of ethnicity which sees historical and cultural trends in light of contemporary regional, political, social, and economic forces that work together to constantly “redefine” ethnic groups. Nagel maintains that people “create and recreate their personal and collective histories, the membership boundaries of their group, and the content and meaning of their ethnicity” (p. 154). She uses examples from Native American, Hispanic, and Asian ethnic groups to prove that there is both intrinsic and extrinsic dynamism at work in these redefinitions. Intrinsically, for instance, African American speakers may see their identity aligned according to advantage and appropriateness in different settings; dark-skinned Caribbean immigrants may at times emphasize their color and ancestry similarities with African Americans and at other times wish to make known the cultural traits that make them distinct. Extrinsically, the social and political forces of stereotypes and social meaning create categories that capture and encase people in ethnic boundaries defined by the dominant culture. To illustrate, Nagel (1994) refers to research conducted on the daily racism confronting African Americans. She says, “Despite the economic success of middle-class African Americans, their reports of
hostility, suspicion, and humiliation in public and private interactions with non-blacks illustrate the power of informal meaning and stereotypes to shape interethnic relations" (p. 156). Other equally disturbing examples are offered for Japanese Americans who were subjugated during World War II and Iranians who were officially targeted and harassed during the Gulf War.

Nagel (1994) believes that ethnicity and culture are fluid commodities enroute to new identity. Culture for any ethnic group changes when it borrows, blends, rediscovers, and reinterprets its identity according to internal and external forces at work in the larger society. She uses the analogy of a shopping cart to explain the construction of ethnic culture. The cart itself describes the boundary of the ethnic group; the culture becomes the things that are put into the cart such as “art, music, dress, religion, norms, beliefs, symbols, myths, customs” (p. 162). The dramatic tensions within the immigrant community to successfully integrate into U. S. society as well as retain solidarity with others who share historical and cultural values is nowhere more apparent than in the Bosnian, Albanian, and Serbo-Croatian populations who must consolidate as a disadvantaged people group in order to find houses, jobs, and language classes and who disengage as they review and revive the anger and hostility they left behind.

Multicultural investigations such as these clearly suggest a need to carefully explore the dynamics that surround inter-cultural communication in order to facilitate understanding, cooperation, and discourse development. Especially crucial are those communicative events that involve powerful elites operating in social roles which
carry additional sources of power such as the capacity to reward, punish, influence, or provide vital information. Because these types of power often reside in the role of the teacher, it is important to learn how teachers and students interact within the context of typical classroom situations. Particularly important is the exploration of ESL teaching situations in which multiply cultures collide and learn to find cultural and linguistic expression. The following discussion helps to frame this dynamic.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE AND POWER

The following section reviews literature that has direct bearing on the role of sociolinguistic power of teachers and students in the classroom, specifically in the ESL context. This study examines traditional classroom settings and procedures cross-culturally in light of the social role and status of educational professionals. The investigation also discusses student impressions of classroom power and describes the process of negotiation that may take place. Several studies recommend that ESL professionals should become teacher-researchers in ethnography in order to fashion a classroom social context which acts as a bridge to successful communicative competence in wider society.

Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) claim that the practices of a society are reproduced and perpetuated through language and education. Participants in society are seen as teachers and students in roles which create a school culture from the model of the dominant culture. As information is passed from teacher to student, educational institutions expect all students to learn and succeed when, in reality, only
those students from the dominant culture are able to understand and manipulate the knowledge that is presented. School success and failure is then evaluated in terms of the possession of "high-status capital, which is unequally available" and which reproduces "social arrangements that are favourable to some but unfavourable to other social groups" (Corson, 1991, p. 239).

Derber (2000) deals with the educational process by first describing informal and formal attention-seeking and attention-giving situations that use the social role and status of individuals to create and maintain asymmetrical power relationships. Informal dynamics, according to Derber, reflect the American quality of individualism but still often portray women and subordinate groups in the attention-giving roles. In formal situations such as doctor/patient, employer/employee, and teacher/student relationships, Derber believes that "it becomes apparent that the way people seek and give attention and the amount they are likely to receive is significantly shaped by their social roles and their status within the major institutional hierarchies" (p. 34). For instance, within formal classroom interaction, attention is governed by teacher/student roles. Further, the author believes that "individuals who typically take on attention-getting institutional roles learn to expect and seek attention for themselves, while those most often assigned attention-giving roles assume a certain socially imposed invisibility" (p. 35). Derber suggests that these roles are a function of social dominance learned through the organizations of family, school, workplace, and politics which later link with socioeconomic power to create asymmetrical relationships.
Particularly meaningful to the present investigation is Derber's (2000) treatment of attention and education. He believes that access to education and to resulting jobs is largely due to one's class position in society. Gaining education, in turn, provides access to valuable resources (what Bourdieu calls cultural and linguistic capital) such as vocabulary, grammar, intonation, and diction (Fairclough 1989; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Van Dyke, 1993). Derber claims,

Members of dominant classes use an expanded vocabulary (including more technical, literary, or simply "big" words) as well as the "proper" or "standard" grammar and diction that others recognize as evidence of advanced schooling. Members of subordinate classes are likely to find themselves at a disadvantage when seeking attention in any face-to-face setting in which people of different classes are brought together (p. 76).

Especially pertinent to this thesis is the sociolinguistic inequality immigrants and refugees would find in U. S. society. Second language learners would be immediately classified as subordinate because of non-standard diction, limited vocabulary, and imperfect grammar. Derber (2000) says, "Members of subordinate classes who do not exhibit the "standard" vocabulary, grammar, and diction are handicapped as soon as they begin to speak" (p. 77).

Similarly, Auerbach (1995) insists that traditional ESL classroom situations categorize and marginalize immigrants in ways other than through spoken language. Often, she believes, the physical classroom is a reflection of the non-native speaker's position in the dominant society. Auerbach notes that adult ESL classes are often conducted in borrowed facilities (such as churches or public buildings during after-work hours) and are frequently moved from site to site depending on availability.
These constraints clearly announce to immigrants the secondary importance of their education. In addition, traditional classroom physical settings where seats are arranged in rows and where teachers assume a position in front of the class present teachers as the “source of knowledge and the manager of interactions” through physical structure, district-determined curriculum, and classroom discourse patterns (Auerbach, 1995, p. 12-13). Auerbach (1995) warns that curriculum development most often reflects the knowledge of experts who assess immigrants’ needs in terms of “language skills or competencies deemed necessary to fit in or function ‘successfully’ within particular institutions” such as workplaces (p. 13). This approach serves to reproduce societal power structures, maintain social control, and disempower those who try to integrate into U.S. society. She says that these constructs assume

that learners should assimilate into preexisting structures and practices without questioning the power relations inherent in them. To the extent that objectives are framed in terms of the needs and demands of institutions rather than learners, and content is limited to knowledge necessary to function according to externally defined norms, relations of domination and subordination are reinforced (p. 14).

As curriculum designers determine pedagogical constraints, Shaul & Furbee (1998) see a reflection of the Foucaultian relationship between power and knowledge at work. They state,

knowledge is a way of naming and ordering the world that favors a group in power and serves to maintain some status quo. Expertise licenses power; judges, teachers, physicians, social workers, lawyers—only licensed experts—exercise authority because of their specialized knowledge in institutionalized settings (p. 175).
Understanding how sociolinguistic power is perceived and utilized in the typical U. S. classroom between teacher and students is an essential responsibility of the ESL teacher. Haleta (1996) reminds us that “language is an important variable in developing impressions about teachers” and that “students assigned more favorable ratings to teachers who used a concise, direct style of language than to teachers who fixed a language style that contained multiple hesitations” (par. 42). Powerful linguistic features seem necessary to establish credibility, organization, and knowledge. Students (and all people in unfamiliar social situations) intuitively wish to reduce apprehension about social interaction by assessing initial interface and attempting to predict how relationships will develop. Using powerful language (without hedges, intensifiers, and hesitations) seems to assure students of the teacher’s knowledge and competence while reducing the student’s uncertainty about classroom interaction. Initial classroom experiences appear to be decisive in “establishing positive relationships and climate” and seem “long lasting and resistant to change” (par. 52).

Benesch’s (1999) investigation of the student-teacher relationship is also based on Foucault’s (1980) theory that power consists of multiple and pervasive elements which co-exist with efforts of resistance. Benesch (1999) recognizes “the classroom as a site of struggle” for power and examines how teachers and students negotiate for control in the classroom (p. 315). In her study, she maintains her role as the teacher of an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) class and also observes her non-native English language students in an American college psychology class. As
teacher-researcher she studies the effects of professorial authority through physical classroom settings and teacher talk (lecture). For example, she describes a raised platform with the professor's desk and chair at the front of the room with a blackboard on the wall behind the platform. Students' chairs are bolted to the floor facing the professor which forces the students to face the teacher and makes student interaction impossible. Although the teacher demonstrates control through lecture and physical position, student resistance is apparent through questioning and written suggestions. She finds that Foucault's theory holds in the classroom; students do not have to be taught resistance. They respond to teacher control through questions and complaints as well as through silence which "may have been a form of protest" (p. 325). Benesch believes that making students aware of the co-existing ideas of compliance and resistance (and how these are realized in the classroom) may give students opportunities to change existing power relationships or at least to voice their opposition.

Noting that the interaction of teachers and students involves language as an "intimate part of social identity," McGroarty (1996) explores the ways in which the attitudes and motivations of both teachers and students frame classroom environment and instruction (p. 3). McGroarty's description of ethnographic investigations and teacher interviews demonstrates how language attitudes and discourse styles in teachers are based on their social and cultural perceptions, which may conflict with those of their students. From students' perspectives, McGroarty (1996) sees the concepts of integrative motivation (the ESL student's desire to become like the target
community) and instrumental motivation (the ESL student’s desire to achieve a goal such as school or work related success) associated with student success in language learning. McGroarty suggests that teachers are instrumental in challenging the classroom dynamic as they investigate student goals, explore both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of language study, identify sociolinguistic norms that shape language contexts for second-language students, and act as mediators of change within the academic institution.

McGroarty (1996) is wise in reminding us that even when second-language students master the target language, their use of English “during interaction depends on several additional social and contextual factors, such as who their interlocutors are and the reasons for, and perceived consequences of, any interaction” (p. 13). Additionally, noting that “formal language study does not necessarily improve general social attitudes toward either the language or the target group,” McGroarty suggests that teachers hold a key for successful interaction through both their “quality of teaching” and “social context of instruction” (p. 21). Of importance in addressing the power relationship between students and teachers, McGroarty sees the teacher as a guide as students form positive attitudes through classroom language study and cautions that we “cannot forget that attitudes and motivation for study are not only cognitive but have strong affective components, so that emotional concomitants of second language study must be addressed explicitly to make the learning experience a positive one” (p. 21-22).
Saville-Troike’s (1996) research examines the relationship of classroom language learning to the wider social functions of enculturation and asks the question, “What does a speaker need to know in order to communicate appropriately and to make sense of communicative situations within a particular speech community, and how does he or she learn this?” (p. 351). Saville-Troike uses important sociolinguistic terms such as “speech community” (a group which shares the same language, rules of speaking, and sociocultural understanding), “communicative competence” (the knowledge a speaker needs to communicate appropriately in a speech community), “linguistic knowledge” (information specific to a speech community concerning phonology, grammar, lexicon, paralinguistic and nonverbal language elements, and social meanings), and “cultural competence” (knowledge of cultural meaning within linguistic form) to advocate the use of ethnography. She suggests that ESL classroom teachers become researchers in order to enhance responsible pedagogy and to guide students in gaining knowledge of culturally specific communicative strategies.

Of central importance to research into power and language dimensions for ESL students who are immigrants and refugees, Saville-Troike (1996) investigates “the functions of language at the societal level, such as its function in creating or reinforcing boundaries which unify members of one speech community while excluding outsiders from intragroup communication” (p. 355). She maintains that effective communication and social integration are unable to take place without a firm knowledge of language function in society because “systematic discrimination or
empowerment” takes place as language is used “to create and maintain power” in “social relationships and networks” (p. 356).

Helping ESL students learn to interact with elites (teachers, doctors, and employers) involves the teaching of both linguistic and cultural knowledge specific to the target group. In order to interact successfully, students must explore native sociolinguistic patterns and compare them with second or target language norms. Students must be advised that learning these “interaction skills is essentially quite different from learning new linguistic features of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation” (Saville-Troike, 1996, p. 366). Similarly, target culture social groups are often based on occupation, social class, status, and prestige. Saville-Troike (1996) believes that knowing the social structure of the target community often reveals “the values and attitudes held about language and ways of speaking” (p. 367). She reminds the ESL teacher that

shared knowledge is essential to explain the shared presuppositions and judgments of truth value which are the essential undergirdings of language structures as well as of contextually appropriate usage and interpretation, and much of this is also culture-specific (p. 368).

Saville-Troike (1996) states that “ideally, all language in classrooms would be used cooperatively by students and teachers to construct mutually satisfying exchanges that further education goals” (p. 374). She suggests that a wise teacher will utilize the principles of the ethnography of communication to understand the ways in which “communicative structures and strategies differ across cultures” (p.
The knowledge gained will enhance not only student communicative competence outside the classroom but will also aid teachers in observing and analyzing the situation in their own classroom and in heightening their awareness of their own interaction patterns with students (and of how their point of view might differ from students' achievements or expectation level or sociocultural identity) (p. 374).

In light of the many cultural and educational factors embodied in the typical ESL classroom, Black (1993) asks us to consider some disturbing but relevant questions. “How do we ‘educate’ and ‘empower’ simultaneously? That is, how do we immerse students into cultural practices while enabling them to take critical (and sometimes resistant) stances? How do we incorporate other language, practice, worldviews, and values?” (p. 31). Black’s empowerment model for the ESL classroom involves a shift from typical educational discourse in which knowledge resides in and is passed from teachers and texts to students. She espouses a constructivist perspective where learning is accomplished through social interaction as students explore and negotiate concepts with others. The classroom becomes a task-based, shared, cooperative-learning environment where information, ideas, and expertise from all multicultural participants are valued, explored, and incorporated into problem-solving situations. In addition, Black (1993) sees the arbitration of social role occurring in multicultural cooperative-learning groups as expertise, age factors, and language ability is observed and negotiated among students. Thus, the classroom becomes a safe experimental site for wider society where power and social dynamics can be manipulated and considered in group discussions.
While the classroom becomes a dynamic context for negotiating language, culture, and social role, McGroarty (1993) believes that ESL teachers bring to the classroom their cultural views on adult social behavior and their expectations for student self-reliance, self-assurance, and willingness to defend personal opinions. Second language adult learners, in contrast, "bring to class years of life experience and cultural knowledge . . . regarding teacher relationships and behavior that prevailed in their home countries" (par. 2). Learners from traditional and formal educational systems "may be displeased, puzzled, or offended if a teacher uses an informal instructional style, such as using first names in class or allowing learners to move freely around the room" (par 3). McGroarty (1993) feels that "failure to conform to these ideals may give learners the impression of lazy or inadequate class preparation on the part of the teacher" (par. 3).

Because of the social dynamics and expectations inherent in the ESL classroom, the ESL teacher of adults has a critical role in her students' acclimation to classroom interaction. For the teacher, searching her own values and attitudes of linguistic and social power is a fundamental step. Samovar, Porter, & Stefani (1998) encourage teachers of multicultural populations to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses they bring to the classroom and to become learners themselves of the cultural heritage of their students. Teachers must become familiar with the structure of the educational systems of students' home cultures as well "their particular learning style preferences, linguistic rules, nonverbal behaviors, and gender role expectations" (p. 217). As importantly, they urge teachers to create and sustain an
open process of communication, allowing students to participate in achieving “shared understanding and common communications codes” and an empathetic style of communication that utilizes “cultural knowledge and acculturation assessment information to determine appropriate cultural responses to their students’ needs” (p. 217).

William Hazlitt says, “There is only one curriculum, no matter what the method of education: what is basic and universal in human experience and practice, the underlying structure of the culture” (cited in Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998, p. 198). In embracing the multiple cultures of her classroom, the ESL teacher becomes familiar with the value systems and educational protocol of her students’ past experience.

In Korean, Japanese, and Chinese cultures, education is typically regarded as the most important factor in future success and teachers are regarded with utmost respect. Student responses generally reflect deference to the teacher and students rarely offer personal opinions. For example, Samovar, Porter, & Stefani (1998) report that “Korean students hesitate to express personal opinions unless they are faced with unfairness, dishonesty, or immoral behavior” (p. 201). As reflectors of social powerlessness, Korean students normally avoid eye contact, speech initiations, and often “remain silent rather than offer a mistaken answer that would insult the teacher and embarrass the student” (Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998, p. 201). Because of the differences between the normally strict and formal Asian classroom
and the commonly relaxed western educational setting, Asian students may find the informality of the typical ESL classroom a bewildering experience.

Similarly, cognitive styles that prefer cooperation over competition, observation over experimentation and clarity over ambiguity in learning may find it challenging to understand and appreciate opposing values and expressions. For example, while low-context U. S. classrooms usually strive for independence and competition, the high-context cultures of Asia, Africa, and the Hispanic nations normally instill group cooperation and collaboration. While low-context cultures typically place increasing importance on informal classroom communication, high-context cultures normally train students to use respectful and formal language to address teachers. Eye contact with a teacher is usually avoided and the formal title of "teacher" (and perhaps last name) is used. Wardhaugh (1998) reminds us that in English, "address by title alone is the least intimate form of address in that titles usually designate ranks or occupations . . . they are devoid of 'personal content'" (p. 264). This formal concept of the teacher in high-context societies reflects the Egyptian proverb, "Whoever teaches me a letter, I should become a slave to him forever" (Samovar, et. al., 1998, p. 207).

Understanding the distinctive contrast between formal and informal language styles and linguistic choices is essential for the ESL classroom teacher. To underscore the importance of cultural knowledge in classroom communication, Samovar, Porter, & Stefani (1998) quote fellow researchers (see Stewart & Bennet, 1991, p. 160) who say that
the degree of informality found in American communication patterns is uncommon in other cultures. In most Latin American and European societies, for instance, there are levels of formality attached to status difference. In Asian cultures, formal communication may be demanded by greater age as well as by higher status. In Japan, formality is also extended to strangers with whom a relationship is demanded. This formality is no joking matter, since failure to follow appropriate form may suggest to others a severe flaw in character (p. 82).

Because the majority of students in typical ESL classrooms represent Asian, Hispanic, African, and European cultures, the learning of cultural value systems, educational patterns, and linguistic choices in teacher-student interaction must form the foundation for pedagogy and interpersonal communication in the ESL classroom.

SUMMARY

Social ideologies, economic factors, cultural values, and pedagogical practices help define linguistic interaction and often prescribe social roles, access to information, and marginalized treatment of those who are dissimilar to the dominant group in society. As the element of multiculturalism is added to this already complex social portrait, new burdens of adjustment may be added for those who wish to enculturate an adopted society. To understand how these dynamics have affected and shaped the perspectives of multi-cultural ESL students, I interviewed twenty-two current students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The description of these students, the interview data, and the discussion of my findings are presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: THESIS DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Immigrants and refugees in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes often describe feelings of uncertainty and awkwardness as they try to assimilate into American culture. Frequently, these uncomfortable situations involve discourse interaction with elites such as educators, doctors, and businessmen. For example, one Asian student feels intimidated to ask for assistance in local businesses because of a perceived social "distance" and her past unsuccessful attempts to communicate. Another student feels rebuffed socially in parent-teacher meetings in an area middle school. These experiences suggest that students may be disadvantaged in determining, evaluating, and responding to American cultural demonstrations of power and authority through speech choices and non-verbal cues. Because of my desire to encourage and assist my students in this sociolinguistic area of communicative competence, I designed and conducted an ethnographic study in order to ascertain demonstrations of power and language between students and teachers in the home cultures of current ESL students. Through interviews with students, I examined sociolinguistic power in typical teacher-student interaction in students' home countries from the students' perspectives. Through these investigations, I hoped to examine cultural data that could be used to enhance classroom pedagogy as I draw cultural comparisons, encourage metacognitive analysis, and explore implications for student empowerment in American culture.
In this chapter I explain the methodology of ethnography, describe the participants, describe and examine the data I collected, and offer an analysis and a discussion of the results. I address my plan for dissemination of the thesis and suggest ways in which further research would augment my study.

DESIGN OF STUDY

The Methodology of Ethnography

Because this thesis is grounded in the principles of ethnography, below I briefly describe this approach from the perspectives of Spradley (1979), Saville-Troike (1996), and Johnstone (2000).

Spradley (1979) sees ethnography as “the work of describing a culture” in order to “understand another way of life from the native point of view” (p. 3). He envisions ethnographers as learners who begin “with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance” in order to discern “the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand” (p. 4-5). Spradley (1979) describes the work of Elizabeth Marshall (Thomas, 1958, p. 43) who learned the culture of the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. In Marshall’s fieldbook is recorded the statement, “Tsetchwe began to teach me” (Spradley, 1979, p. 4). Spradley (1979) sees this statement as pivotal for the ethnographer who sets aside the role of researcher to become a student.

Saville-Troike (1996) explains that ethnography is the enlightening and provocative marriage between anthropology and linguistics that studies communicative activity within, between, and among culture systems. Ethnography
seeks to answer the question, "What does a speaker need to know in order to communicate appropriately and to make sense of communicative situations within a particular speech community, and how does he or she learn this?" (p. 351). Ethnographers are often interested in discovering how language and attitudes about language and their speakers interact with and effect social and cultural outcomes. Because ethnography seeks to understand these outcomes through the personal experience of participants, it is the method best suited for determining and understanding the cultural distinctives of powerful and powerless language. Through ethnography, teachers can foster awareness in ESL students as they are empowered and invited to voice attitudes and language descriptions specific to their home cultures. As students compare home culture values with typical American values of language and power in society, they may be able to explore what Saville-Troike (1996) calls "systematic discrimination or empowerment, as well as the maintenance and manipulation of individual social relationships and networks" that "effect social control" (p. 356). She explains further by saying,

The functions of language (rather than the forms) generally provide the primary dimension for characterizing and organizing communicative processes and products in a society from an ethnography of communication perspective; without understanding why a language is being used as it is, and the consequences of such use, one cannot understand the meaning of its use in the context of social interaction (p. 356).

Through such an ethnographic study of power and language in society, I believe that learning can take place in the relative safety of the ESL classroom where exploration
through reading, discussion, debate, and role-play can begin to equip students for
effective communication in U. S. society.

In *Qualitative Methods in Sociolinguistics*, Johnstone (2000) defines
"empirical" as "based on observation" (p. 24) and "qualitative" as research which
involves "how and why" questions based on insights "gained from talking with . . .
research subjects" (p. 35). She believes that ethnography allows researchers to more
adequately explain behavior because they have unique and personal perspectives from
which to work. She says,

Different people's relationships to the world are mediated by different
traditions of and strategies for assigning meaning to things, and
ethnographers are interested in learning what objects, people, and
events mean for people in different situations, roles, groups, or
societies (p. 83).

Further, Johnstone states that of all research techniques, the "ethnography has
the potential to empower members of the researched group in ways other approaches
may not" (p. 83). This is the hope and goal of the present research study. As I gather
data that will reflect student perspectives of power and language in teacher-student
relationships, and as I choose to assign value to each individual interpretation, I take
the first step in affirming and empowering my students.

**Research Site**

As teacher-ethnographer, I work for Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) but
teach at an off-campus site outside the GRPS school district. While the main adult
school campus is located in the city of Grand Rapids, my classroom is part of the
educational wing of Church of the Servant near the city of Kentwood where GRPS rents classroom space during the weekdays. My classroom is self-contained and spacious enough to comfortably hold 25-30 adult students. This classroom served as the interview site for sixteen of the twenty student interviews. Three interviews were held at the main campus in Grand Rapids, and one was conducted in a student’s home near Calvin College.

Participants

Students in the GRPS Adult Education ESL classes come from a rich variety of cultural backgrounds including significant populations from Hispanic, Asian, Eastern European, and African cultures. Many have chosen to immigrate to America to experience enhanced educational and vocational opportunities while others seek asylum from political and religious persecution. All are hopeful that a new beginning will enable them to pursue a quality life for themselves and their families.

Students in the ESL program range in age from a minimum requirement of twenty years of age to approximately seventy years of age. Currently, 42% are from ages 20-24, 50% are from ages 25-44, 8% are from ages 45-59, and less than 1% are 60 or above. The majority of these students are married with school-aged children. Most students are engaged in jobs that do not reflect their educational status or their previous job experience in their home countries. Because of their lack of command of the English language, they find employment in factories, assembly-line plants, and
local businesses where manual labor jobs do not require advanced English proficiency.

Many of the students from Asian and African countries in the GRPS ESL classes have studied English during secondary school in their home countries. While they generally have an adequate grasp of grammar fundamentals, they find listening and speaking skills extremely difficult because their English experience was confined to strict academic settings with no pragmatic environments in which to practice using their language knowledge. Many European students, from countries such as Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo as well as most Hispanic students have not had previous English language instruction.

Most ESL students are engaged on a regular, interactionary basis with their children’s teachers and administrators in elementary and secondary public schools and with employers at their work sites. While they focus on the demanding tasks of language acquisition and cultural adaptation, they find themselves in social, educational, and work situations that demand more sociocultural knowledge about the structure and pragmatics of U. S. culture than is at their disposal.

For the purpose of the study, I chose students for inclusion in the interview process because they represented a composite picture of the countries and ethnic groups represented in the GRPS ESL population. Currently, 68% of students enrolled in the ESL program are Hispanic, 18% are white, 11% are Asian, and 3% are African. Twenty-two students from Hispanic (Mexico, Venezuela, The Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Brazil), European (Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia, Yugoslavia, and Albania),
Asian (Korea, Japan, Vietnam), and African (Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea) countries enthusiastically participated and shared invaluable cultural insights that reflected and reified the knowledge base gathered from the literature review of power and language.

In order to conduct research that would not be hindered by lack of English language ability, all of the students that I interviewed for my thesis are presently in the High Intermediate or Advanced level of GRPS classes. Sixteen women and six men participated in these in-depth, single interviews making the data a synthesized representation of cultural norms for teacher/student verbal and non-verbal interaction from twenty-two individual, personal-reflection examinations. Although these percentages do not reflect the total female/male enrollment percentages of 43% female and 57% male, they do represent the female/male ratio at my off-site campus. The participants recalled their own experiences as students in cultural classroom settings and two participants, one female and one male, additionally reflected on their return to the classroom as teachers in their home countries.

Data Collection

I interviewed twenty-one students in the familiarity of their regular classrooms during after-school or off-day hours and one student by securing an appointment in her home. In addition to taking detailed notes during each interview, I tape recorded each session. In accordance with the principles of ethnography outlined by both Spradley (1979) and Johnstone (2000), I asked general informal questions at the
beginning of the interviews in order to create a comfortable affective atmosphere and to allow students time to get accustomed to having the tape recorder on. For instance, I asked students to tell me about a typical day in the life of a secondary student in their home country. I found that my students almost immediately relaxed, perhaps realizing I would be asking questions that were reflective of personal experience rather than academic in nature. After taping each interview, I transcribed the tapes. The bulk of the data contained in this chapter comes from the transcripts of these interviews.

Over the course of five months, I met individually with the twenty-two ESL students and asked a range of seventeen questions (see Appendix C). In general, these questions focused on classroom physical and affective environment, daily routine, and student-teacher relationships in their home countries. For example, in order to ascertain a teacher's physical presence and any affective results, I asked students to draw a map of their classroom and label physical objects such as doors, windows, raised teaching platforms, and teacher and student desks showing position and orientation to each other. In order to investigate how a teacher's location in the classroom may effect the affective environment, I asked students to reflect on the teacher's movement in the classroom, especially if it changed for any particular reason such as with in-depth instruction or discipline.

I investigated classroom routine and teacher-student interaction through questions that allowed students to recall typical school day practices, initial greetings, and customary habits for asking questions, interacting with fellow students, and
reacting to behavior issues which might result in discipline. For example, I asked, “Could you ask questions during class time? How would you get the teacher’s attention to ask a question? Could you interrupt a teacher if you didn’t understand something in the lesson?” To explore the type and extent of teacher control of the classroom, I asked students if there were any words, gestures, or paralanguage that their teachers used to show that they were in charge of the class and how these were demonstrated during interruptions such as whispering or inattention. For example, I asked, “Are students able to talk to each other during class time? What about when the teacher is talking . . . could you quietly whisper to one another?”

To conclude each interview, I asked the students to evaluate the social role and status of teachers in their home countries. I often wrote down a list of occupations in random order (such as lawyer, doctor, businessman, teacher, office worker, government worker, police, politician, cashier, and road worker) and asked students to help me rank them in order of importance in their culture.

In the following section, I provide examples of transcriptions to illustrate general patterns that I discovered among the participant responses. In order to protect the identities of my students, I have used pseudonyms in each place where personal names are needed to interact with the data. I (Bonnie) use the initial “B” to label my turns.
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson (1992) outline a research model that I have followed in my ethnography to understand the communicative dynamics of my multicultural student population. The authors suggest “empowering research” which includes “research on, for, and with” (p. 22) those we wish to study and encourage. The authors “argue that sociolinguists will make more effective advocates if they know how the community itself perceives the matter in hand” (p. 126). Tapping the cultural knowledge inherent in my students’ perceptions of language use has allowed me to understand the variety of cultural values within my classroom. Without such knowledge it would prove impossible to relate to student understanding of power and language and to create an atmosphere of trust where meaningful dialogue can transpire as students present questions about the enculturation process. With this in mind, the following narrative describes several key areas of typical teacher-student interaction in the home cultures of my students. Following this description is a discussion of general patterns in student responses under the headings of classroom layout, greetings and address, eye contact, discipline, student talk, teacher paralanguage, and teacher social status. A chart presentation of these patterns is located in Appendix D.

Classroom Physical Layout

Without exception, the students that I interviewed used a portion of my interview notes to draw an overhead view of their classrooms showing formal,
traditional placement of student desks, the teacher’s desk, and the blackboard. The teacher’s desk was invariably placed in the front of the room, the blackboard was on the wall behind her desk, and student desks were placed in rows facing the teacher’s desk. In most classrooms, walls were not decorated with maps, charts, or posters, and clocks were rarely mentioned.

In many classrooms (Viet Nam, Sudan, Ethiopia, Bosnia, and Albania), the teacher’s desk was not only larger and more decorative but also was placed on a raised platform so that it was on a much higher level than the students’ desks. Lectures were generally delivered from this position. Even in classrooms where teachers and students were on the same level physically, teachers usually stood to lecture and sat down only when students were working on writing exercises. Teachers typically walked around in the classroom when asking questions and when challenging a student’s behavior.

In a number of cultures (Viet Nam, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the Dominican Republic) students typically sit on chairs or benches at long tables that can accommodate up to five or six students. Generally, students described classrooms as small and overcrowded with as many as forty students.

Greetings and Address

In all the cultures represented, students use formal language to greet and to address their teachers. In addition, the non-verbal, formal response of standing when the teacher enters the room is seen in most cultures with the exceptions of the
Dominican Republic and Brazil where students usually remain seated. In Korea when the teacher arrives, one student typically stands and says, “Pay attention!” The remaining students stand, all bow, and in unison repeat, “Good morning, Teacher.”

In explaining the significance and meaning of this ritual, Tae Mung (T) said,

T: Ah, we pay attention, would stand up and get attention, bow, she’d quote “bow” and then we “Good morning.”
B: Um, the teacher would say “good morning” to you. Would she smile and be happy to see you?
T: No, no, no, our country, our teacher is very conservative, very strict. In my case, I (unintelligible) our country we are very strict and we have to humble.

Perhaps reflecting the on-going military action in Sudan, Amani (A) explains the extended greeting procedure that generally includes a formal assembly that is held outside in a common area before classes begin.

B: At the beginning of the day, do the students come into the classroom first or does the teacher come first?
A: No, the all of the students like in the whole school, like this one (creates the shape of a square with her hands) the students.
B: Stand in a square?
A: Yeah, stand in a square and then the teacher and the both the teacher is coming talk there like ah, to dance ah, yes, singing.
B: Ah, they have singing?
A: Yes, they sing for Sudan and flag.
B: Neat! And, then do the students salute or do anything?
A: No, just sing and look at flag.
B: Attention.
A: Yeah, attention like a soldier.

In Russia, students normally all rise but remain silent to show utmost respect. My Russian student declared, “Students give silent greeting. There is not close relationship in our country.” One Bosnian student, a former teacher himself for 25 years, commented, “In my country students and teachers are not friends.” This strict
and generally austere atmosphere is reflected in another Bosnian student’s (Verna’s) (V) recollection of beginning class procedures.

B: You would stand up?
V: Yes, we must stand up. Is our way to show respect.
B: When the teacher enters, you stand up. Do you say anything?
V: Yes, good morning, something else.
B: Does the teacher say anything?
V: He answer us, “Good morning. Sit down.” I have one teacher (unintelligible) he old, he in the class, he was very good teacher, strong, but in the class you can hear just the mosquito flying.

This same Bosnian student helps to frame many of the responses that were given in Asian and African cultures for the type of formal terms that are used by students when addressing their teachers both inside and outside the classroom. In Bosnia, students usually use the plural form of “you” when addressing or answering a teacher because it is the most polite form and demonstrates utmost respect which shows that “in my country, we are not so near to our teachers.”

In Korea and Viet Nam, students often do not know or use a teacher’s personal or family name and typically use only the word “teacher,” Sun Saeng Nim (Korea) or Co (Viet Nam). Thi Le (T) laughed nervously when asked about the use of any other name but “teacher.”

B: Okay, and you would say “Hi, teacher.”
T: Yeah, “Hi, teacher,” or something and then she would say, “Oh, you sit down please” and then we sit down.
B: Okay, and do you say “teacher” . . .
T: Oh, yes, we only say teacher. Their name not polite.

In Sudan, a distinction seems to be drawn between very strict terms that are necessary in the classroom and those that are allowed outside the classroom. Judah
(J) reflects that the formal term, "teacher" is typically used outside the classroom but never permitted while in the classroom.

B: I want to ask you what you call your teacher when you are in class.
J: Only "master" we can use that. Master is one who lead us to be educated. He give knowledge internal. Never say "teacher" in class. Only "master." "Teacher" okay outside class but no family name.

The word "master" was reflected in only one other culture in my sample. While most Hispanic students acknowledged that the word "teacher" is used, Vicente (V) explained that most students in the Dominican Republic are very careful to offer respect to their teachers both inside and outside the classroom.

B: In your country, what do you call your teacher at school?
V: Oh, teacher, only we say "Professora" or "Maestra" or "Maestro."
B: Oh, how could we translate "maestra" into English?
V: Only "master," "teacher." We are very distance between teacher and students. We need so respect because later you can have trouble in school if they say something bad about you.

Some cultures allow either a first or family name connected to the formal title of "teacher." In Japan, students may use the form "Teacher + family name" while in Ethiopia and some areas of Sudan students must be careful to never use the teacher's family name. In these African countries, "Teacher + first name" is allowed during after school hours.

Generally, greetings and forms of address are formal and follow expected, specific cultural rules of respect and social distance. All of the students I interviewed seemed eager for me to understand the importance of this aspect of teacher-student
behavior. In relating successfully to teachers, greetings and forms of address seem to set the stage for other types of verbal and non-verbal contact, including eye contact.

Eye Contact

Eye contact between students and teachers is allowed in every culture except during punishment in Korean schools where it is typically seen as very disrespectful. Tae Mung (T) explains.

B: What about looking at a teacher in class. Is it okay to look directly into their eyes?
T: Sometimes, right in their eyes. We can use an upper gaze.
B: You can use an upward gaze. You can look at them and you can look into their eyes.
T: But, sometime, if teacher got angry, sometime this teacher said to me, “You listen to me. Lay your head forward and your eyes down!” (Tae Mung puts her head down so that it is resting on her arms, which are folded in front of her.)

In the African cultures that were investigated, direct eye contact is often a necessity to demonstrate a student’s attention and understanding. Typically, if teachers do not see their students’ eyes, they suspect something is wrong and will question the student for behavior or comprehension. Kahunda (K) talks about how a teacher in Ethiopian culture expects to “read” a student’s eyes.

B: And does he look in your eyes and do students look back into his eyes?
K: Yeah, sure, he’s following eye contact, both.
B: And it’s okay for students to look directly at their teacher? They don’t have to look down?
K: No, just they keep watching what he’s talking about, unless they are confused about what he’s talking about. So, if they start looking down, he just start to explain another way. So if needs to read your eyes, he need to.
B: Wants to see you eyes to see if you’re paying attention and you understand?
K: Yeah, right.

Eye contact is not only allowed in the cultures that were investigated but also necessary in some situations to establish recognition of proper classroom behavior and understanding of concepts that are taught. Direct eye contact seems to be encouraged except in the one instance in Korean culture where looking into a teacher’s eyes would indicate disrespect during discipline.

**Discipline**

Discipline of students in the classroom is perceived along a wide continuum from extremely formal and strict (Asian, African, and some Hispanic cultures) to nearly non-existent in Brazil where discipline is generally so lax that students can do almost anything they want, from socializing with friends during class time to public displays of disobedience. In talking to Violetta (V), I wondered if Brazil would most closely mirror many schools in the United States where students are simply sent out of class to the principal’s office. Violetta (V) says that most Brazilian teachers and principals are not allowed to harm students physically or emotionally by speaking to them in a brusque manner. She says,

V: Teacher has to try to be more powerful than student. You need to be a really strong personality.
B: So, having good discipline is class is difficult for teachers?
V: Discipline is hard, too much freedom at school. Students can do most anything, socialize, talk to friends, don’t obey. That discipline thing in Brazil is hard.
In contrast, most teachers in European, Asian, and African countries use various forms of verbal, corporal, and social punishment. According to Fedora, Russian teachers typically “speak loudly and yell in class” using commands such as “Be quiet!” Instead of voice volume and verbal commands, many Korean teachers use non-verbal and corporal punishment to demonstrate their power. They may slap a student’s face, hit an open palm, pinch the skin under the upper arm, or use a stick to strike the back of the calf (especially with boys). Additionally, Korean teachers may throw chalk or erasers at offending pupils and often berate students as they force them to stand before the entire class. Tae Mung (T) explains an especially humiliating scene.

T: Maybe sometimes teacher got angry, he use his stick on the palm.
B: Okay, when a teacher is talking, no student talking.
T: Mostly teachers says, “Don’t do that!” (uses a loud voice) or he has student stand up and one person holds knees and another person hold your arms up in the air” (demonstrates by holding her arms straight up over her head).
B: How long would you have to stay like that?
T: End of class or maybe teacher, um, sometimes, um, running around outside ten times.
B: And could you complain about the discipline if the teacher did this to you during the day?
T: We can’t, yeah, we can’t complain.

Like Asian teachers who often punish students publicly, African and Hispanic teachers may humiliate students in front of their classmates. Kahunda (Ethiopia) spoke of situations in which a teacher would pull a disrespectful or disobedient student to the front of the class and ask his peers, “Is that okay what he was doing?” Classmates are asked for suggestions for suitable punishments and offenders rarely
repeat misdeeds. As Kahunda says, "No one likes to be in front of his friends." Vicente (Dominican Republic) remembers students being placed at the blackboard in the front of the room where they would either stand facing their peers or kneel, keeping their knees on the floor and their faces toward classmates, for extended periods of time. If an especially disobedient student was being reprimanded, the teacher may even force a student to stand outside the classroom in the sunshine with his arms stretched out parallel to the ground. From Cuba, Maria (M) recalls feeling that the teacher's control in the classroom was like that of a deity. She says,

M: He is god in class, he's "menare." We can call him "machismo" because he learn everything from government, so he "Marxismo."

B: Would you translate the word "machismo" into English?
M: He is "boss." Everyone can watch him grab your clothes and say, "Shut up!" He can hit you palm or stand with face against the wall and hit your bottom.

With the exception of Sudan, Kahunda (Ethiopia) explains the discipline philosophy of many African nations (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda) where teachers are generally seen as surrogate parents and where students usually respect their teacher's position, words of advice, and right to punish. In talking about ways in which teachers in Ethiopia demonstrate their authority role in the classroom, Kahunda (K) says:

K: Everybody knows that he is the boss for the next forty minutes. You will never act out.
B: Students will never act...
K: We will sit properly, you know, it's not allowed (unintelligible) you can not do something funny in class. If you are doing something not normal.
B: What will the teacher do?
K: Maybe he'll ask you to (pause) maybe yell at you. Getting a high, loud sound.
B: Would he hit you?
K: Sometimes. Yeah, sometimes with his hand or he’s got his book. Yeah, sometimes with a stick if he’s got one.
B: And where would he hit you, on your hand?
K: On shoulder and back. Yeah, nobody complain, because he’s just like your father and nobody complains.
B: Oh, nobody complains.
K: And never should have say sorry. Student would say, “Excuse me.”
B: So is your teacher like a father figure to you?
K: Yeah, like a father.
B: What if you had a woman teacher?
K: A mother. Yeah. They don’t tell us something that’s not good for us. That’s why we are respect them and respect what they say.

In many cultures, discipline includes both parental involvement and access to promotions and continued schooling. In Sudan, Judah and Amani remember that teachers never spoke loudly or harshly to their students. Teachers would only look at the student, give a quiet warning, and in the case of a repeated action, would write a description of the misbehavior in a book. The book would be taken to the director of the school who would, in turn, show it to the student’s parents. Judah says, “Parents may forgive once, but not two times.” Amani recalls that parents would usually beat their children at home because of the extreme embarrassment caused by such a summons to come to school. Students from Ethiopia and Eritrea agree.

Although parental involvement is generally seen as shameful to both parents and children, the ability of a teacher to withhold advancement or access to learning seemed to hold more significant ramifications for a student’s future life. In Albania, under Communist rule, teachers were usually political as well as school authorities. If a student misbehaved, the teacher could force her to copy political articles from the newspaper or would give poor appraisals for superior work. Sarama (S) recalls that
students generally had no recourse in complaining about unfair treatment in assessment scores. Out of a perfect score of ten, Sarama remembers receiving a “number five” grade on papers with no mistakes. She believes she was harassed in her school years because of her family background, which included a grandfather who escaped to France for asylum and an uncle who took refuge in Chicago.

B: You must have been afraid when you went to school.
S: I was scared all time. Teacher could send me to jail if not every word was correct. And, making one mistake, you go to director. Next time if you get a bad number in education, maybe leave school one year.

In the Dominican Republic and Viet Nam, students often receive similar treatment. Vicente (Dominican Republic) reported that teachers are usually political appointees of the government and hold power over students both during and after school hours. Typically, teachers are able to write reports about students who are disrespectful or who misbehave outside of the school environment. These reports are then used as evidence in forcing a student out of school. A report for lack of proper respect could force a student to repeat an entire year of school.

In certain situations in Viet Nam and Sudan, consequences could be even more formidable. Thi Le’s (T) voice increased in speed and intensity as she explained the seriousness of being asked to leave school.

B: So, if they call the parents, then it’s very serious.
T: And then, serious. Student, they frighten. They say you, the school, they don’t welcome the student. Stay home.
B: Oh, then the school says to the children, “Stay home.” Can they come back to school?
T: Never come back to school.
B: So, they’re finished with the education?
T: Yeah, yeah. Maybe the student go to another school, yeah. But very difficult because in my country, everyone does teacher report to parent.

Although his Sudanese teachers were not harsh verbally or abusive in punishment, Judah recalls their tremendous power as they recorded a student's every bad deed in a school register or journal. Using this record, a teacher could end a student's academic career and assure the student a life of poverty, insignificance, and social shame as he returned home to work in the fields. The teacher's decision was final, Judah (J) says. “He can send you away, not continue to study.” A Sudanese student's concept of teachers and their control of the access to education is seen in the following example of interview talk with Judah (J).

B: Then, nothing is more important in your country than education?
J: Teacher is expert, gives you solutions to problems. Knowledge can save your life. All benefit in life come from school. If you don’t have education, you are last person on earth.

Overall, discipline is strict in the cultures that I investigated. Students seem to obey because they respect their teachers' position of authority and are cognizant of the importance and value of education. In many situations, students may use techniques of self-surveillance because of the teachers' ability to interrupt or deny access to education. In addition, teachers often involve parents in the disciplinary process that causes social shame for the family. With such a seeming aura of fear penetrating the classroom atmosphere, I was interested in knowing how students participated in the learning process. I especially wanted to know what types of student talk were typically allowed.
Student Talk: Asking Questions and Initiating Comments

My study suggests that students are rarely able to ask questions or initiate conversation in class. In Korea, Japan, Venezuela, Cuba, and Mexico, students must normally wait until break time or after class to approach a teacher to ask a question. One Korean student, Sung Hee, remembers her feeling during class time as frightening. She said, “Teacher was like a god. Even if we have to go to bathroom, we do not ask.” Other Korean students felt that if questions were urgent and students felt they couldn’t wait until after class to get information, students were typically allowed to raise a hand and say Mi (me). Two Japanese students remembered raising their hands and quietly saying Sen-se (teacher). In former Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Albania, Eritrea, and the Dominican Republic, students generally may ask questions if they, with silence, raise the first two fingers of their hand. In Viet Nam, students are generally allowed to ask questions if they silently raise their hands with the palms of their hands forward and in front of their faces.

Most cultures that I investigated typically do not allow for student initiation of conversation, classroom discussion, or disagreement between teachers and students. The former Serbo-Croatian teacher said, “I talk, students answer.” Korean students are generally taught obedience with no room for disagreement. One Korean student, Sung Hee (S), reacts to my questions about opportunities for student opinions.

B: Could you disagree with your teacher or perhaps add a comment or observation of your own?
S: We couldn’t disagree, just obey with what teacher says. In my heart, it’s not correct, but I didn’t say. Just on outside, I agree. In my heart, I don’t obey or ah, agree.
Most Hispanic students felt that in certain situations discussion is allowed but teachers usually don’t like interruptions and when students do gain a hearing in the classroom, the teachers often “show they are mad at you.” Vicente (V) talks about such situations and reminds me of the need to offer respect in the classroom.

B: How do students participate in the classroom? Would it be acceptable to interrupt a teacher if you didn’t understand something? Maybe add a personal opinion?

V: Teacher, no. No, never. We need put a little distance between me and teacher. We need to careful and show respect.

B: So, you wouldn’t ever interrupt?

V: If teacher talking, students listen.

Side conversations are generally not allowed or quickly settled. In Bosnia, a teacher would typically walk to the student’s position and say, “please” with a stern, strong voice or chastise the student by saying, “Salu. you know better than that!” In Korea, the teacher may use verbal commands of “Don’t do that!” “Be quiet!” and “Listen!” Thi Le (T), from Viet Nam, remembers students talking to one another during a teacher’s lecture.

T: They talk too much. They talk and then they play their games, they writing a piece of paper and then throw the paper to another student.

B: But, the teacher isn’t happy?

T: No, they not happy. They punish the student. Stand up...

B: The student stands up?

T: Yeah, and then stand up they (unintelligible) punish the student, ah, maybe you stand up, maybe you stand up through the rest of the class hour.

When asked about student side conversations, Judah (J), from Sudan, recalled the importance of education in his country and stressed the significance of remembering every word of a teacher’s lecture.
B: Is it okay for students to talk to each other during class time?
J: No, must be silent. Must record every word on paper with pen.
Only pen is talking.

In contrast, Violetta (V) recalled that, usually, Brazilian teachers allow student side conversations if they take place in whispered dialogue. She laments the difficulty of keeping students focused on the lesson instead of friendly conversation.

B: Are students able to talk to each other during class time?
V: Students do that. It's not the best thing. Need to be more focused.
Students are allowed to whisper, but sometimes don't. Teacher has to try to keep them in control. Is hard.

With the exception of Brazilian culture, students who were interviewed generally agree that students are limited or unable to express themselves in the classroom through questions, initiations, comments, and side conversations. In the data from the transcripts two themes seem to reoccur frequently; students were typically fearful of their teachers' responses to their talk if some form of punishment were possible and students were generally aware that learning by listening to lectures was the primary way to gain a good education.

Teacher role in these cultures seems to embody many types of power. For example, the teacher is able to punish (coercive power) and is the source of information (expert power). Certainly, the teacher has the ability to give rewards (reward power) and to influence (legitimate power) the students academically as well as socially. Of interest at this point was the question of paralanguage and if such nonverbal communication was perceived by the students as authoritative.
Teacher Paralanguage

My study suggests that teachers commonly stand in the classroom to lecture and walk around the classroom to ask questions and to investigate disruptive behavior. All of the students who were interviewed recalled that their teachers moved to the student’s position when administering discipline. Generally, voice volume also rose during discipline with the exception of Ethiopia and Bosnia where most teachers never raise their voice volume or appear angry during confrontations with students. Except for these two situations, all of the interviewees used such language as “louder and louder voice,” “yells,” and “angry voice” when describing typical teacher intervention.

Commonly, during discipline, loudness of voice is accompanied with the use of gestures. Typical strategies include placing a finger in front of the mouth, knocking on the desk with a hand or a stick, and clapping hands together to demand silence. In addition, in some Hispanic cultures (Cuba and the Dominican Republic), teachers may grab a student’s clothing to emphasize his authority and cause the student to sense the seriousness of the situation. One interesting variation in the use of gestures is noteworthy. Two Japanese students describe their teachers as formal and rarely demonstrative. Yumi (Y) explains:

B: Are there any particular words or gestures that your teacher used in the classroom?
Y: Most teachers very calm, not active. American people use big gestures like . . . (uses her outstretched hands and moves them to her shoulder width). Japanese teachers and all Japanese don’t use gestures.
Generally, in the cultures that were investigated, teacher paralanguage is important in emphasizing the authority of the teacher in both pedagogy and discipline. The one exception noted in Japanese culture is interesting, especially in light of other Asian students' reflections. Because Yumi included “all Japanese” in her description of general social gestures, it seems appropriate to consider how the social status of the teacher is compared to the position of other professionals in the larger society.

**Teacher Social Status**

In order to gain a general understanding of the ways in which teachers are seen in the social structure of various cultures, I asked the students to rate various professions in order of importance. Interviewees from Viet Nam, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and the Dominican Republic all place the teacher as the most important person in their society. In addition to social role, the Dominican student indicates that because of salary, teachers are also more economically prosperous than other workers. All of the students with this particular cultural interpretation see their teachers as providers of education that unlocked the doors of opportunity for jobs and success in life. Three student responses seem pertinent to illustrate this viewpoint.

In Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Viet Nam, teachers are typically honored and respected for their ability to prepare students for the future. My conversation with Thi Le (T) demonstrates the importance of the teacher’s position and influence.

B: Who are the most important people in Vietnamese culture?
T: Most respected is the teacher. Yeah, because they say you, ah, grow up, you have to respect everything.
B: They teach you how to behave in life?
T: Yeah, yeah, you become, ah, engineer or you become everything they say from the teacher.
B: Okay, so in all of your culture, a teacher is very respected. What about a doctor? Under a teacher?
T: Yeah, I think so. They are to say only one thing. Everything you are, more come from teacher. They are teaching you too many education and then from your child until you grow up. Some student after they succeed like engineer, and then we have one day, the teacher day, and then we come back and then we celebrate with the teacher.

This concept of honoring teachers on a designated day of the year seems especially significant in demonstrating the status and honor afforded to teachers in Viet Nam.

Kahunda (K) speaks not only of the importance of education for future preparation, but also of the significance of the teacher figure in the family structure in typical African society.

B: And who are the most important people in the whole culture?
K: Teacher most important.
B: So, not a businessman or a lawyer . . .
K: We do not care about lawyers or rich man.
B: Ok, so rich people aren’t as important as teachers.
K: Yeah, I don’t know what they call in English, the teacher’s a “stick.”
B: The teacher is a stick?
K: It’s not a stick in our language. Something that helps you see light in the dark. (After the interview, I was able to ascertain that the word he was searching for was “flashlight.”)
B: Oh, so you might call a teacher a “light” to help you?
K: A light to help you to see through the dark. Even when we are finished with Elementary school and going to high school, when we are in different place, everytime I go to my place I have to visit my teachers. I feel they are just one of my relatives, my father or mother. They will ask me what I got over there, what I love most.
B: So, a teacher is very respected but also a good friend.
K: Yeah, a guide and help, yeah. We will never forget them. And still, if you love someone you never forget. Once someone knows more than me, I have to hear what he has to say.

Lastly, a teacher may help elevate family status in Dominican culture. Vicente (V) strongly declares that teachers are the most powerful people in society and that respect is given to them by children, young adults, and older people. At one point in our interview, he gives an example of a teacher who might be seen in a public place such as a park. Vicente points into the invisible scene before us and says excitedly, “Everyone says, ‘There’s the teacher!’” He also relates a poignant story of typical families who beseech a teacher to accompany them to the church to participate in the baptism ceremony of their child. In this way, the teacher becomes part of the family and adds his social respect to that of the family. Vicente (V) says:

V: Teacher is “padreno” or “madreno,” so family is very happy!
B: Victor, what are the English words for “padreno” and “madreno”?
V: Means “little father” or “little mother,” teacher. The family want the teacher to go to baptize because teacher is most respected.

Vicente’s recollection of such high social value contrasts significantly with the Brazilian student’s placement of teachers at the end of the list of professions. Other cultures that report low social status of teachers include Albanian, Bosnian, and Russian. Interviewees from these cultures see government officials, police, and some highly paid professionals (such as lawyers) as substantially more important and valuable than teachers. Some students comment that government officials such as crime inspectors, who have very little education but high social value, gain their social respect through fear.
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

My overall impression of teacher/student relationships in cultures outside the United States is one of formality and severity. Compared to U.S. classrooms where students are given ever widening latitude in their informality in dress, posture, terms of address, speech initiations, and respect for authority, these societies appear unyielding and oppressive. I do not doubt my ESL students' confusion over classroom interaction in the ESL context and dismay, at times, in placing their children in typical public school environments where the same level of respect for authority is often not expected, required, or enforced.

As I consider my fieldwork and attempt to relate it to my own classroom experience, I propose that the ESL classroom is a potent proving ground for power relationships and that the cultural interplay among immigrants and refugees alternately rewards or offends participants. I further suggest that the ESL classroom is a microcosmic picture of a much wider immigrant society as it tries to define itself within the borders of the dominant U.S. culture. Sociolinguistic transfer in which the rules of speaking in one's own cultural group are used to interact with members of other cultures or groups (Chick, 1996) may be involved in ESL classrooms as ethnic worlds collide on the cultural context continuum from "high" to "low" context cultures where both social rules for discourse and tolerance for distance in social status are often conflicting. Complex and complicated power relationships may be formed among ESL students in the classroom that could further complicate the process of learning about power relationships in American society. For example,
Asian students like Thi Le (Viet Nam) who believe that using a teacher’s name is not polite may be confused by the familiarity generated by the use of teachers’ personal names (Bonnie) in the ESL classroom. African students like Judah (Sudan) and Dominican students like Vicente may feel especially perplexed as they consider their previous use of the highly respectful and formal term “master” to refer to classroom teachers. These students may have difficulty in adapting to the ESL classroom social climate and be disconcerted as they try to teach their school-aged children traditional respect for authority in American elementary and secondary settings.

Allowing students to recognize and discuss aspects of sociolinguistic power from individual cultural perspectives may lead to acceptance and respect for differences. This seems like a natural first step in learning about and adjusting to American cultural demonstrations of language and power. Therefore, I would like to relate my analysis of the interviews to my observations of classroom dynamics where power and language seem to connect in significant ways.

My classroom observations provide interesting and sometimes conflicting data with what students describe in the interviews as cultural norms. Although my ethnography indicates that Russian and Eastern European cultures conduct strict classroom environments, instead of seeing quiet, conforming attitudes among Russian, Bosnian, and Albanian students, I normally find these students the most verbal and dominating people in the classrooms.

In one interactive situation with five Bosnians and one Hispanic, it was interesting to see the concept of group solidarity giving the Bosnian students
confidence and dominance, even when they answered questions incorrectly and displayed low-level language ability. One older Bosnian man clearly dominated the entire group, perhaps displaying power associated with age and gender while the one Hispanic female student seemed to be marginalized because of gender and low-language competence.

Even more amazing, I have seen the Albanian female student, Sarama, who felt so enslaved by teacher domination in her home country ("I was scared all time.") dominate classroom activities as well as initiate freely, answer for other students, and assume the role of a teacher in responding to classmates' attempts to answer questions. The Albanian woman's domination seems to portray the research theories of Reid and Ng (1999) who believe that power in gender-specific discourse is revealed through speech initiations and interruptions. The Asian students in this same class typically portrayed their cultural understanding of politeness, turntaking, and silence. Because one Korean woman appeared to have more language competence than the Albanian woman, I am left to wonder if her silence displayed her high-context cultural understanding of power and knowledge.

These cultural demonstrations of power in the classroom seem connected to social class theory. Ullman (1997) cites McKay and Wong as "emphasizing the role of power in all conversations involving immigrants, from personal interactions to national, societal debates" (par. 8). Although personality traits account for some dynamics in social discourse, Ullman insists that the "learner's ability to speak is... affected by relations of power between speakers. Structural inequalities such as
racism, sexism, and classism can limit learners' exposure to English as well as their opportunities to practice it” (par. 5). Knowing that the Albanian woman is married to a doctor who is currently practicing here in the United States helps explain some of her classroom behavior. As a strong Islamic force in her life, her husband pressures her to succeed in her language learning because, as he says, “Education is more important than eating.”

While some information from Russian and European cultures was surprising in light of typical observations of classroom behavior, generally the information gathered from the ethnography of Asian and African students is consistent with their classroom practice. Asian students typically demonstrate reserved behavior, quiet speech tone, and non-initiation in classroom interaction unless called upon to comment, answer questions, or participate in small group discussions. Asian high-context sensitivities and familial constructs concerning social rules and conversation may inhibit Asian students in initiating comments and conversations especially when information is new and exploratory in readings, idioms, and news items rather than the more comfortable, structured patterns of grammar.

As with Asian students, African students in the classroom setting also seem to genuinely reflect the patterns of cultural norms that emerge from the interview data. African students are among the most faithful in class attendance, engagement in class discussion, and intensity in seeking information. As Judah (Sudan) says, “Knowledge can save your life. If you don’t have education, you are last person on earth.” These key behavioral aspects may reflect their view of education as the key to success for
life and employment here in the U.S. In addition, African students tend to be highly respectful in speech and action to both teachers and fellow students. Their speech interactions are typically conducted with quiet tones and anger is rarely displayed, even in provocative discussions during group interaction. Through their compliance and strict interpretation of classroom behavior, both African and Asian students may be demonstrating learned, internalized behavior where self-surveillance assures submissiveness to classroom authority even when external control is not applied (Foucault, 1980; Benesch, 1999).

As students from diverse cultural backgrounds unite to learn English, perhaps the perspective of the cultural context theory would allow for understanding of the multidirectional forces at work in the ESL environment. As Asian and African students choose to display high-context sensibilities, as European and Hispanic students discover a more enhanced power dynamic among face-saving classmates, and as students interact with gender and social issues of power, teachers would do well to recall Deborah Schiffrin’s (1996) pivotal comment when she reminds us that the “way in which we construct and maintain social interactions” is also a way “of expressing our sense of who we are and who are interactants are” (p. 332). The ESL teacher must be aware that a Korean student’s silence in the midst of aggressive question and answer sessions might demonstrate her cultural values of politeness and respect, her cultural rules of turn-taking and classroom response, and perhaps her use of silence to indicate superior knowledge. A forceful European male student may be demonstrating his own social or professional status in his home country as well as his
gender dominance. McGroarty (1996) reminds us that formal study of a target language “does not necessarily improve general social attitudes” and that “contact between different groups is insufficient to bring about positive feelings toward another group” (p. 21). Only through a teacher’s committed and concerted efforts can second language learners develop tolerance and appreciation for respective cultures, values, styles of learning, and situational use of language. The teacher may hold the key to positive relationships and a blending of power styles through her quality of teaching and the emotional context in which her class is conducted.

I see our task as ESL teachers as enormous and multifaceted. We must become students of world culture as well as observers of our individual students and how their personal stories intersect with their attempts to learn English. We dare not separate the learning of a language from the culture surrounding the language. Likewise, we must celebrate the languages and cultures of our students in order to learn the hidden attitudes behind the obvious outward behavior demonstrated in the classroom. The following discussion offers implications for a teaching philosophy that reflects a commitment to multicultural affirmation and expression.

**Implications for Responsible ESL Pedagogy**

In the ESL context, the relationship formed between teachers and students is critical in bridging the frightening gap between the multiple home cultures of students and the complex societal structures of American life. Quintero (1994) cautions us that teachers are responsible for utilizing and valuing the attitudes, perceptions,
cultural heritage, and worldview of the cultures represented in the ESL classroom. Eliciting the expert cultural knowledge and values of students is an ongoing and ever-revealing search uncovered through life experience stories, family trees, writing and photograph journals, and various communicative group work. Such activities allow interaction and personal understanding by “comparing ways of viewing and acting in the world” and “do not force the learners to abandon or devalue their own cultures” (par. 5). For example, Vicente (Dominican Republic), Victoria (Brazil), and Thi Le (Viet Nam) might compare cultural views of classroom respect for teachers, discuss divergent cultural implications in wider society, and brainstorm ideas about ways to instruct their own children as they interact with teachers in America. Sarama (Albania), Maria (Cuba), and Fedora (Russia), who recall the strict, Communist philosophies that dominated classroom interaction may find an intriguing comparison as they dialogue with classmates from Asian and some Hispanic cultures that allow more freedom of expression. These students may discover attitudes that are being transformed and restructured in light of American culture. Further, they may explore situations in American life in education and business where their home cultures influence their perceptions and interactions with American culture.

Armed with cultural background and insight, and teaching English within the context of American culture, the ESL teacher is able to guide her students into the realization that language learning, defined in a social context, can empower them to redefine and at times recreate their social image and competence.
The ESL classroom could well be the only safe place for immigrants and refugees to redefine their lives using their historical framework, their classroom and societal interaction with other worldviews, and their interface with American culture. Nagel (1994) claims that "ethnicity is constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, and regionality" (p. 153). Further, Nagel believes that "cultures change; they are borrowed, blended, rediscovered, and reinterpreted" (p. 162). I borrow her analogy of a shopping cart to suggest that immigrants and refugees can select items from the shelves of shared cultures of the past and present to create a new culture here in America. Additionally, as students begin to explore American culture, they may choose to add those American cultural items that enhance the growing development of their enculturation process. As ESL teachers we have the privilege of assisting our students as they choose to hold on to essential past values, assess the distant cultural values of classmates, release their grip on those values that no longer exist in their new situation, and recreate their identity in a new world.

Ullman (1997) suggests that immigrants and refugees take part in "self-recreation" (par. 8) as they interact in the ESL classroom, network with the new and confusing society around them, and process their place in the larger national and social debates on inclusion. She suggests that students explore identity issues through portfolio writing as well as large and small group discussions about cultural context issues. The use of photographs and indigenous objects are able to stimulate conversation and provide opportunity for students to compare and contrast cultures.
Ullman sees small group discussions as beneficial in comparing teacher/student roles in different cultural settings. In these sheltered contexts, Vicente (Dominican Republic) may be able to articulate how the formal use of "master" for the teacher indicates a social role quite different from other cultures. His belief that Dominican families often hope to incorporate teachers into family structure may be similar to Kahunda's Ethiopian perspective where teachers are typically regarded as parental figures but quite different from Tae Mung's Korean portrayal of strict formality between students, teachers, and families. As social role is explored and compared to American attitudes, ESL teachers may be able enlarge this domain and introduce the national debates on the influx and adjustment of immigrants. Through reading and discussion of newspaper articles and watching videos of newscast sections students may be able to develop critical thinking skills in relationship to their own personal stories. (See Appendix E for Ullman's suggestions.)

Quintero (1994) reminds us to create lessons that stress multi-directional learning to include all aspects of the students' lives. Bringing into the classroom the various ways in which life touches our students will enable them to learn English within the context of culture. In this regard, I would include issues of family life, the concerns that students' children face in elementary and secondary school settings, job and workplace adjustment, and daily living skills in society. For example, ESL learners may compare the formality of Asian and Eastern European classrooms where students are typically limited in the ability to ask questions and unable to initiate classroom conversation with the relative informality of U. S. educational settings.
where such verbal interaction is normally expected and encouraged. Adult ESL students visiting and observing such practices in their children's schools and bringing back sample discourse to the ESL classroom could introduce comparisons and stimulate ideas to help their children successfully enculturation into the U. S. classroom context. As ESL teachers propose this type of informal research within the classroom, issues that are pertinent to their students will give direction and substance to ESL teaching situations.

Another of Quintero's (1994) suggestions finds resonance in my thinking. She suggests that teachers visit in student homes to discover innate thinking strategies, values, and worldview. From my years of teaching in Kenya, I understand the African proverb reminding us that we do not know people until we have been in their homes "to sit with them." There is something uniquely personal about our ways of knowing the world that is displayed in our homes as we invite others in to share it with us. Recognizing and valuing the variety of ways in which our students acknowledge and understand worldview is essential in making relevant the lessons of the classroom.

After having reviewed the literature about language and power, I would also advise using some of the information gleaned to construct lessons that directly address linguistic power issues in U. S. society. I am particularly intrigued by Reid and Ng's (1999) study and would deem it worthy of a more in-depth look and evaluation for appropriate ways in which to integrate the techniques they propose. I often contemplate the societal picture my students present to the greater Grand Rapids
area. They are, I believe, the representation that Ng and Bradac (1993) portray in their definition of a powerless speaker. They say, "the ultimately powerless speaker exhibits nonstandard accent or dialect, high hesitancy, many hedges, much repetition, and a slow rate of speech" (p. 47). Although my goal is not to absolve my students of accent (but rather to value the influence of their home language), I feel that other areas of powerless language could be addressed within a language competency program. An awareness of powerless language forms in student directed situational contexts might be a springboard for discussion. For example, the Korean student (Hee Sook), who painfully described her experience with the school principal during parents' night activities at her son's public school, was willing to share this encounter with her fellow classmates. She described the principal's aloof attitude, lack of eye contact, and physical diversion in order to escape speaking to her and her husband, and she acknowledged that the principal's actions were hurtful and seemed prejudicial to her. It became an excellent opportunity to infuse some of Derber's (2000) concepts that relate specifically to diverse contexts like parent-teacher meetings where those with the most cultural and social capital dominate those who are seen as a subordinate group. We were able to discuss in a group setting some of the non-verbal cues, dominant/subordinate class and social issues, accent, and language forms that were apparent in the context. I found that, without exception, the other students actively participated in the conversation and were able to lend additional insight from similar situational encounters. As I continue to encourage students to bring into the classroom their own ethnographies of communication
during social interaction, we will, together, build bridges from the ESL classroom to both language competence and cultural understanding.

Patch (1995) describes the concept of metacommunicative behavior that may have pedagogical implications for the teacher of ESL students. The author defines metacommunication as the act of commenting on behavior or espousing values about behavior in an immediate social situation. Patch suggests that people who metacommunicate are willing to comment on the appropriateness of another's behavior as it happens, thereby legitimizing their own standards or their own perspective. People who do not metacommunicate, constrained by a tacit acceptance of another's behavior, sacrifice power for the sake of face saving and politeness (par. 6).

Because immigrants and refugees may be marginalized by linguistic features and social status, the possibility of teaching an adapted form of metacommunication seems worthy of investigation. My Korean students, for example, might experiment in a safe environment the possible language forms to comment on the situation unfolding between themselves and the school principal. "You seem too busy to talk with us" or "Our accent is difficult for you" are comments that might infuse a more relational aspect of power in the conversation. Ullman's (1997) suggestion of using improvisational dialogues "based on learner's experiences of conversations in which they felt they were not listened to" (par. 14) could be an initial way to connect the theory of metacommunication with learner communicative competence. She recommends eliciting a few lines of actual student conversations with powerful speakers, reviewing linguistic forms of powerful speech, and allowing student pairs to finish the dialogue with appropriate responses to provide ways in which to be heard.
While metacommunication is an intriguing methodology for use in the ESL classroom, before it is implemented more research needs to be done concerning the conflict immigrants and refugees might create within themselves and their own culturally perceived taboos of interpersonal behavior.

Finally, I propose Hawkin’s (1997) pedagogical model which suggests that all aspects of language and culture within the ESL context may be successfully explored through the use of cooperative learning groups composed of students from diverse cultural persuasions who must learn to negotiate social role within the group as well as individually researched information that is essential for group problem solving. An affirming ESL teacher will encourage members of these groups to define personal and cultural perspectives, moderate speaker and listener logistics of turn-taking, practice language forms that may lead to inclusion and access to social power, and metacognitively assess patterns that are developed. Thus, the ESL classroom may serve as a shelter where students are fostered in practices that may enable them to use language and their own recreated social images to enculturate into American society.

**Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study**

The ethnography and my personal classroom observations generally coincide with the findings presented in the literature review that portrays a cyclical reproduction of unequal power relationships taking place in society between elites and non-elites. The one interesting surprise was that not all multicultural students react to their teachers and classmates in direct agreement with their culturally learned
situations of language use. In general, however, the cultural trends explored in the ethnography were confirmed with Asian, African, and most Hispanic students and variously confirmed in European nationalities. More research needs to be done with student populations from Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia, and Albania. Other variables may be at work that have not been considered in the traditional classroom investigation. For example, the Eastern European population may be expressing the social upheaval brought on by war and the multifaceted emotional interplay of flight, freedom, and resettlement in the United States. The Russian and Ukrainian population may feel, in the U. S. classroom, a dynamism of free speech never known in their communist controlled educational settings. The recreation process for some of these groups of immigrants may be more complex than we are able to discern.

In addition, because I found such a wide variety of student responses describing classroom atmosphere and teacher-student relationships in my interviews with Hispanic students, further study needs to be done with a more comprehensive Hispanic audience. While my study included students from Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, investigation into other Hispanic countries might yield data that would indicate more weighted trends. Conversely, further research may conclude that using the term "Hispanic" is too inclusive to describe the wide variety of cultures who are connected only by the Spanish language.

Lastly, in order to present a more holistic picture of the dynamics of sociolinguistic power, further study should be undertaken where social and cultural reproduction may lead to unequal power in relationships such as doctor-patient,
police-citizen, and employer-employee. Seeing these roles from a multicultural perspective could lead to significant classroom investigations and may provide insight for immigrants as they continue to enculturate into American society through employment, health care, and community life.

The importance of using ethnographies of communication and the implications of this study in my own classroom cannot be overemphasized. As an ESL teacher, I must see my classroom as a Linguistics Research Lab, filled with brilliant, culturally competent students enthusiastic to share their own cultures and eager to learn to walk confidently in American culture as they learn English. With my students as my guides, I have the privilege of clothing my research facts with names, faces, histories, and poignant stories.

PLANS FOR DISSEMINATION

I am scheduled to present a summary of my thesis to my ESL co-workers in May 2001 at a teacher in-service meeting in Grand Rapids. At that time, I will make available to them a list of resource materials that were of help to me in my investigation of multicultural issues of power and language. I will attempt to share my belief that ethnography may be our best hope as ESL teachers to create classroom materials that will most effectively equip our students as they work toward enculturation and communicative competence.
REFERENCES


## Appendix A

Table 3-3 Ranking of Forty Countries on Power Distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking*</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A low score means the country can be classified as one that prefers a large power distance; a high score is associated with cultures that prefer a small power distance.

Appendix B

Table 3-6 Cultures Arranged Along the High-Context and Low-Context Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Context Cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German-Swiss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower-Context Cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Appendix C

Questions for Student Interviews

1. Tell me about a typical day in the life of a secondary school student in your home country.

2. Could you describe a typical classroom? How would it be set up? The students’ desks, the teacher’s desk or table, the books, etc.? The door in relation to the desks? What about other items in the room like a clock, bulletin board, etc.? Where would the teacher usually stand or sit? Would this position change during the class time?

3. What happens at the beginning of the day? Do the students arrive in the classroom first, or is the teacher present with the students arrive?

4. How do students greet their teacher? Is it a verbal or non-verbal greeting, or both? What facial expressions are used, if any? Are the students excited about seeing their teacher? Worried about the work for the day? What are some typical thoughts and feelings in the classroom?

5. How do teachers normally act in the classroom? (Nonverbal)
   - face – smile, no smile, relaxed, stern
   - dress – formal, casual
   - posture – sit, stand
   - gaze – direct eye contact, no eye contact
   - vocalization – fast/slow, loud/soft, pitch

6. How do students address the teacher while in class? Would that change if the teacher were an advisor in an after-school activity in which the student was a participant? How would a student greet a teacher in a chance meeting in public, outside of the school building and school time? Would they have a conversation together? What are some things they might talk about?

7. Do students ask questions during class time? How would they get the teacher’s attention to ask a question?

8. How do students participate in the classroom activities? Would it be acceptable to interrupt a teacher if a student didn’t understand something or to add a personal opinion or observation? How would a student ask a question?

9. Would a teacher ever use a personal story or example to illustrate the content in a lesson? Would she/he ask a student/s for any personal examples?
10. How does a teacher demonstrate to her/his students that she/he is in charge of the class? Are there any particular words or phrases or gestures that would indicate the teacher’s role in the classroom?

11. Are students able to talk to each other during class time? What about when the teacher is talking...could the students whisper quietly to one another?

12. How would a teacher discipline a student? Could a student complain about this discipline or go to another school official about any classroom situation?

13. Does the teacher’s voice get louder during discipline? Does he/she move toward the student?

14. Are men and women teachers treated differently?

15. What is the average age of secondary school teacher?

16. Is there any distinction between teachers who have different levels of education or degrees?

17. Who are the most important people in your culture? Could you help me make a list of them? Would a teacher be considered a powerful person in society? If so, why do you think this is true?

In order to learn more about words, phrases, and ideas, other follow-up questions would be asked in response to clarify general information answers. For example: Could you tell me a little more about that? What types of information would the teacher provide? Could we list some of these? In this list now, would you pick out the three most important? You say that teachers are often critical. Could you give me an example when you saw that happening in a classroom? How would the other students be feeling? What would they be thinking during this exchange?

The answers to these questions will serve as a basis for investigating deeper cultural meanings and concepts.
## Appendix D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bosnia (Serbo-Croatian)</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher address at beginning and in class</strong></td>
<td>“Drug” meaning Comrade (present day – Sir)</td>
<td>All rise in silence – a silent greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher address outside class</strong></td>
<td>Students and teachers are not friends</td>
<td>“Hello, first name/middle name”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye contact</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student gets teacher’s attention/asks questions</strong></td>
<td>Remain silent, raise two fingers/questions are discouraged</td>
<td>May not initiate in class/silently raise hand for a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student disagrees with teacher</strong></td>
<td>“I talk, students listen”</td>
<td>Yes, but if rude, students go to Headmaster/bring relatives to talk to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student add opinions to class</strong></td>
<td>Not allowed/“teacher talks/students listen”</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Paralanguage and gaining students’ attention</strong></td>
<td>Clap hands, stern voice/“Listen to me!”</td>
<td>Speak loudly/yell in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Talk to student/send to headmaster</td>
<td>Yells “Be quiet!” Very strong punishment/leave class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side conversations allowed</strong></td>
<td>Teacher walks to students, says “please” using stern, strong voice</td>
<td>Not allowed/students know not to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which people are powerful in society?</strong></td>
<td>Teachers, anyone in government or politics</td>
<td>Only people in the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher address at beginning and in class</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students all rise, may say “Good morning”</td>
<td>Student initiates, all rise, bow and use “Teacher”</td>
<td>Student initiates, all rise, bow, say “Good morning”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Teacher address outside class | Never see them in public “Teachers only talk to other teachers” | “Teacher” (title only) and bow | “Teacher” + last name/may also use a nickname in informal conversations |

| Eye contact | Yes | Yes, when asking a question but not during punishment | Yes/must be direct when answering questions |

| Student gets teacher’s attention/asks questions | May not initiate in class/silently raise hand for a question | Never interrupt or initiate/raise hand silently for a question | Raise hand, say “Sen-se” (teacher) or raise hand silently |

| Student disagrees with teacher | Students are too fearful to disagree | Students not allowed to disagree, just obey/teacher like a god/”In my heart I didn’t obey” | Students very shy/may see teacher after class |

| Student add opinions to class | Lecture only/no discussion | Never. Lecture only/no discussion | Students very shy |

| Teacher Paralanguage and gaining students’ attention | Teacher never smiles because education is serious/students come only to learn Teacher can yell during class | Calls out a number, never uses a student name | Teacher may hit hand on desk or clap/no gestures “All Japanese people don’t use gestures” |

| Discipline | Copy political articles Go to director/may be denied access to further education | Very strict/may hit student’s hand/pinch arm, use a stick/stand in front of the class/slap face/throw eraser | Teacher uses loud voice to say, “Attention!” or “Be quiet!” |

| Side conversations allowed | Not allowed Students would be sent to the Director | Teacher says, “Don’t do that!” / “Be quiet!” / “Listen” | Not allowed |

<p>| Which people are powerful in society? | Only those who help the government/Teachers are not important | Teachers, doctors, lawyers, University professors | Doctors, judges, university professors, businessmen, teachers |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Sudan</th>
<th>Ethiopia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher address at beginning and in class</strong></td>
<td>Students rise, say “Hi” to teacher, do not bow</td>
<td>Teacher initiates/says “Good morning”/students respond and stand to left of desks/use “teacher”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher address outside class</strong></td>
<td>Students show respect by not using a teacher’s name/only title, Co (teacher)</td>
<td>“Teacher” and possibly first name, never family name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye contact</strong></td>
<td>Yes (students may not be able to look because of writing class notes)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student gets teacher's attention/asks questions</strong></td>
<td>Raise hand silently in a special way (palm toward and in front of face)</td>
<td>Raise hand silently/may be asked to stand if teacher is unable to hear or understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student disagrees with teacher</strong></td>
<td>Students never participate in class/only silent</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student add opinions to class</strong></td>
<td>No, students are only silent</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Paralanguage and gaining students’ attention</strong></td>
<td>Very serious face/stands to lecture but walks around to ask questions/speaks loud to get attention</td>
<td>Teacher stands/moves around classroom/may use angry voice to yell “leave class” during discipline/claps hands together for attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Yells at students/moves closer to student/may send them home</td>
<td>Teacher sends students to Director who calls parents to come to school (“parents won’t forgive twice”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side conversations allowed</strong></td>
<td>No/teacher very angry and may throw papers at students</td>
<td>Not usually allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which people are powerful in society?</strong></td>
<td>Teachers, doctors</td>
<td>Teachers, doctors, businessmen, government officials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Students rise, say “Hi” to teacher, do not bow.
- Teacher initiates/says “Good morning”/students respond and stand to left of desks/use “teacher.”
- Students show respect by not using a teacher’s name/only title, Co (teacher).
- “Teacher” and possibly first name, never family name.
- Yes (students may not be able to look because of writing class notes).
- Raise hand silently in a special way (palm toward and in front of face).
- Raise hand silently/may be asked to stand if teacher is unable to hear or understand.
- Students never participate in class/only silent.
- Not allowed.
- Very serious face/stands to lecture but walks around to ask questions/speaks loud to get attention.
- Always stands to lecture, walks around to ask questions/Moves toward students and raises voice during discipline.
- Teachers, doctors, businessmen, government officials.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher address at beginning and in class</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students rise silently, teacher initiates first, students respond “Good morning, teacher”/“teacher” in class</td>
<td>All rise, “Good morning, Teacher” (may use last name)</td>
<td>All rise, teacher greets first, “Good morning”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher address outside class</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Teacher” only</td>
<td>“Teacher” (title only)</td>
<td>“Teacher” but may add last name after elementary school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eye contact</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/students must look directly at teacher</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student gets teacher’s attention/asks questions</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raise hand silently/teacher gives permission to speak</td>
<td>Raise hand and say, “Teacher”</td>
<td>Raise hand and say, “Teacher”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student disagrees with teacher</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not allowed</td>
<td>Sometimes students can disagree/teacher will discuss Usually, teachers don’t like any interruptions</td>
<td>They will be angry if you disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student add opinions to class</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teachers don’t like students to interrupt</td>
<td>Teachers are angry with interruptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Paralanguage and gaining students’ attention</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher never smiles/always stands to lecture</td>
<td>Calls a name</td>
<td>Calls a name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has the right to punish/Teacher may hit a student or tell student to kneel down in front of class</td>
<td>Very strict but never hit/send to principal’s office or write a paper</td>
<td>Some are friendly about discipline, most are very strict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side conversations allowed</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May whisper for a very short time</td>
<td>Not allowed/no interruptions in class</td>
<td>Not allowed/no interruptions in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which people are powerful in society?</th>
<th>Eritrea</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, doctors, police, government worker</td>
<td>Doctors, lawyers, teachers</td>
<td>Doctors, lawyers, teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher address at beginning and in class</td>
<td>Students rise, say &quot;Good morning&quot;/&quot;The Revolution is Best&quot;/use &quot;Teacher&quot;</td>
<td>Students do not rise/Teacher says &quot;Hello&quot;/not necessary to respond/use &quot;Teacher&quot; + first name</td>
<td>Students say &quot;Good morning&quot; without standing/use &quot;Professora&quot; or &quot;Maestro&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher address outside class</td>
<td>&quot;Teacher&quot; only/no conversation</td>
<td>&quot;Teacher&quot; + first name</td>
<td>Same as in class/need to be very respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student gets teacher's attention/asks questions</td>
<td>Raise hand/may say, &quot;I don't understand&quot;/or ask after class</td>
<td>Raise hand, wave, call &quot;Teacher&quot;/may also walk to front of class</td>
<td>Raise hand silently/teacher asks student to stand to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student disagrees with teacher</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
<td>May &quot;wave&quot; to interrupt</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student add opinions to class</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>May &quot;wave&quot; to interrupt and add opinions</td>
<td>Never. &quot;Teacher talks, students listen&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Paralanguage and gaining students' attention</td>
<td>Teacher stands to lecture/walks around, may yell or grab clothing during discipline</td>
<td>Teachers are very restricted/can't even speak loudly to students/teachers are fearful</td>
<td>Teacher very active, walks around, no smile, some hand gestures/may grab a student during discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Teacher yells &quot;shut up&quot;/writes comments in record book/send to Director/parents punish</td>
<td>Very lax/students are sent to Principal but he will just send them back to class</td>
<td>Teacher may hit or humiliate a student in front of class/send out of class/fail the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side conversations allowed</td>
<td>&quot;This is very bad&quot;</td>
<td>Students socialize freely with friends/don't obey teacher's warnings</td>
<td>Not allowed/teacher can hit a student/parents will agree with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which people are powerful in society?</td>
<td>Government officials, police, teachers (&quot;they learn everything from government&quot;)</td>
<td>Businessmen, doctors, lawyers, government officials/teachers &amp; police not very respected</td>
<td>Teachers because they receive the best salary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ESL TEACHER

Char Ullman from the University of Arizona gives the following recommendations for the ESL classroom teacher who seeks to understand her students' social identity and how it relates to language learning. This text was filed in October of 1997 and was obtained through the Eric Digest at http://www.cal.org/ncle/digests/

*Portfolio Writing:* Eliciting learners' personal stories both orally through the language experience approach (Taylor, 1992) and in writing is a good first step. And because identities are multiple and dynamic, it may be helpful to elicit these stories time and again, focusing on different aspects of identity throughout a class, encouraging learners to build portfolios of their own writings so that they can consider their shifts in identity over time (Peirce, 1995). The texts *Collaborations: English in Our Lives* (Huizenga & Weinstein-Shr, 1996) and *Stories to Tell our Children* (Weinstein-Shr, 1992) offer starting places for this kind of work.

*Dialogue Journal Writing:* Dialogue journals (Peyton, 1995) can also help learners explore issues of identity. In-class writing about a particular topic (work issues, for example), can be shared with a classmate or the teacher. Learners may find that different aspects of their identities emerge when they are writing with a classmate as opposed to the teacher, or that they can explore a certain topic better with one classmate than another.

*Small-Group Conversations:* A photograph from one's native country or a meaningful object can be the impetus for small group or pair discussions. Teachers might participate in these groups from time to time, discussing their own evolving identities as descendants of immigrants, or as immigrants themselves. These discussions acknowledge the wealth and variety of learners' past experience while providing a way to start talking about the future.

*Improvisational Dialogues:* These exercises can begin with brainstorming a list of language strategies for being heard, such as "Wait a minute" or "Listen." Then, the teacher can elicit four or six lines of a dialogue based on learners' experience of conversations in which they felt they were not listened to. Pairs of students can use the dialogue as a starting place, improvising the rest of the conversation and finding ways to make themselves heard.
Bringing Larger Discourses into the Classroom: What are some U.S. perspectives about immigration? Listening to news reports and reading articles about public attitudes toward immigrants, for example, can facilitate the development of critical thinking skills and help learners to see some of the ways the larger culture perceives this aspect of their identities. This can help learners to better understand the outside pressures on their sense of self.
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10 April 2001

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ABSTRACT: Because of limited English proficiency and sociocultural knowledge, adult ESL students may be disadvantaged in determining, evaluating, and responding to American cultural demonstrations of power and authority through speech choices and nonverbal cues. As a first step toward a pedagogy that addresses this sociolinguistic need, this ethnography investigates aspects of power and language in the teacher-student relationship in the home countries of twenty-two adult ESL students. Student responses are analyzed and compared, and a pedagogical framework is proposed which may foster ESL students' linguistic and social development toward greater access to information and a more informed process of enculturation into American society.