PARTICIPATION IN LITERATURE AND CONTENT SUBJECT CLASSES:
CULTURE, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL SPACE(S)

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Abstract

This qualitative case study discusses six English Language learner (ELL) adolescents' experiences of language use in ESL classes, English Literature classes and content subject classes (i.e., Math and Science) in high schools of Toronto, Canada. We found that participants perceived English Literature classes as a social space of "others" where they were more likely to keep silent for several reasons. In contrast, ESL classes and content subject classes were considered as a social space of "ours" within which they participated more actively with hybrid forms of language use and sociocultural practice. This article links the findings to the nature of social spaces and language use. In particular, the content and interaction in classroom activities are explored, which form multiple social spaces for language use and impacts learning outcomes. The study concludes with a discussion on content, interaction and local practice in the school curriculum to enhance second language learning.

Keywords: social spaces; content subject classes; class participation; language practice.

1.   INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the experience of language use in English literature and content subject classes (i.e., Math and Science classes) of a group of English Language learner (ELL) adolescents. The participants came to Canada after the age of 15 (i.e., late arrivals) and became full-time secondary high school students. Coming "late" to North America, this group had higher L1 proficiency than English proficiency.

Studies have found that it generally takes 2-3 years for ELLs to be competent enough to engage in context-based activities in English, and 5-7 years to be able to participate in context-reduced activities in English (Cummins, 1991). According to Cummins' (1991, 2009) theory of common underlying proficiency, ELLs with higher L1 proficiency can employ cognitive skills that they have acquired from L1 learning to English and content subject learning. As late-arriving ELLs, this group is more likely to progress in a shorter time than early arrivals, i.e groups who arrive at the age for or before elementary education (Roessingh & Kover, 2002).

Current studies focus on one group of ELLs who have limited English proficiency yet meanwhile need to learn the knowledge of content subjects with English as the only instruction language. Fewer studies have identified another group, late-arriving ELL adolescents, with regard to their experience in those courses. This group will have taken rigorous content subject courses in their home country in L1, yet their English proficiency is in need of improvement. Due to their prior learning experience in L1, their experiences in content subject classes and English Literature classes can be very different from other groups.

2.   CONTEXT

Canada has been receiving immigrants from different countries for many years. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) (2008), Canada receives more than 130,000 students a year. The Canadian government has been expanding visa student programs to recruit a larger number of students. Mainland China has become one of the top groups with higher number of visa students in recent years.

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) includes the city of Toronto and 4 regional municipals. It is Canada's business and manufacturing center, which has attracted a large number of immigrants and temporary visitors every year. In 2006, 68% landed immigrants chose to reside in Toronto (Statcan, 2007). Accordingly schools in those areas report a higher percentage of students in need of ESL education. Schools in the GTA are changing in that the ELL population outnumbers the Canadian-born student population (Mandel, 2008; Minichiello, 2001). In some classes, the majority of students are ELLs in which English has become a language that is used only in class or with teachers (Anderson, 2002). With regard to ELLs, usually the term 'early arrivals' is used to refer to those learners arriving to an English-speaking country at or before the age of 8 (Böhlmark, 2008) or before the age for elementary education

(Roessingh, 2008). Late arrivals refer to those arriving at or after 15 (Roessingh, 2008). In this study, all participants came to North America at and after the age of 15. Thus they are called late arrivals, regardless of their residential status in Canada, for instance, permanent resident or visa student.

The six focal adolescent participants in this study were full-time students of five different secondary high schools in the GTA, Canada. They landed in Canada after the age of 15, and had resided in Canada for no more than 4 years at the time of this study. Five participants studied at four public schools in the GTA, while one studied at a private school. They completed junior secondary education in Mainland China prior to the landing. They studied at very top junior high schools in China. Due to a different educational system, this group received enhanced Maths and content-subject curriculum in China, and their L1 was comparatively more advanced than early-arriving ELLs.

3.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:
SOCIAL PRACTICE, SOCIAL SPACE AND LANGUAGE USE

This study takes a sociocultural perspective on language use, which centers on the interaction between learners and a broader social cultural environment. Culture and ethnicity in this study are defined as life experience (Handa, 2003). A sociocultural perspective on language use stresses "the interrelationships amongst language, place and doing" (Pennycook, 2010, p.1), where "language use is part of a multifaceted interplay between humans and the world" (ibid., p.2). Dual meanings of a sign system emerge from the interaction between learners and the outer world (Bakhtin, 1986; Fairclough, 2001; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). In this regard, language use is always a two-sided act (Hall, Vitanova & Marchenkova, 2005). Language use reflects complicated interaction between language users and the social context. While social practice impacts on language use, language users change social practice as well.

Social space is referred as the sociocultural context in which language users interact. Social spaces are the products of social actions mediated by capital and knowledge (Lefebvre, 1991). People in a social space share similar perceptions, and place the same weight on forms of capital: social, symbolic and economic. Moreover, a social space embodies preference for certain daily life practices (Baynham & Simpson, 2010) and social relations (Bourdieu, 1989). Such social practices and social relations privilege certain social groups and disadvantage others. In other words, a space prioritizes certain discourses, and enables or disables certain social practices (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck, 2005; Toohey, 2000). Also, a social space functions as a symbolic system, producing capital and knowledge (Bourdieu, 1989). By engaging in shared social practice, people in one social space perceive the social practice as self-evident, which may produce different realities to people from different social spaces (Bourdieu, 1989). People in the same social space can have different perception of realities as well, due to their varied relation to domi-

nant capital, which further impacts on their sense of affiliation to the space (Bourdieu, 1989).

Social space stresses the dynamic and fluid nature of social interaction (Wertsch, 1998). It is the product of as well as the source of sociocultural and historical activities, and it "unlocks the fixity of meaning and identities" (Kostogize, 2006, p. 176). Social space is the combination of the place, the time and situated sociocultural practice (Gee, 2012; Hélot & de Mejia, 2008; Pennycook, 2010). A school is a broad social space. It is a legitimate space prioritizing school curriculum, dominant social practice, and dominant symbolic capital, which shapes learners' social interactions and social practice. Yet a school can have several social spaces due to learners' distance from the dominant practice. In other words, learners in this social space position themselves, and are positioned, differently due to their access to symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989). Learners who have close access to dominant symbolic capital and social practice are usually in a dominant position, and usually will further rationalize such social practice. For example, when the contents of a class favor certain groups of learners due to the connection to their sociocultural and language practice, texts, curriculum and pedagogy are then granted meanings to its insiders/outsiders (Brockmeier, 2001). Therefore, learners from different sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds have a varied sense of belonging to a social space, due to different connections to the dominant social practice (Miller, 2003;Hadi-Tabassum, 2006). Further, different classes can be different social spaces due to different social practice.

4.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Late-arriving immigrant adolescents encounter different values and beliefs in the Canadian school system (Anderson,2002; Au, 2004;Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa & Jamieson, 1999), including school curriculum and teaching pedagogy (Chen, Boyd, &Goh, 2003; Cummins, 2000;Roessingh& Field, 2000), and social division (Andersson, 2003; Chau, 1996;Chuang, 2010; Li, 2009; Liang, 2006; Taylor, 2006). Yet, compared to early arrivals, this group has better knowledge of their first language, thus they are more likely to achieve higher in a shorter time (Cummins, 2009; Roessingh, 2008).

Perceived as a model minority, Chinese late-arriving immigrant adolescents have experienced stereotypes in school curriculum and pedagogy (Chau, 1996; MacKay & Wong, 1996). They are usually identified as a quiet group in classroom participation yet excellent in academics, in particular Math and science-related courses. Several reasons have been discussed in regard to their silence in classes. Alford (2001) found that late-arriving immigrant youth lacked critical thinking skills essential for class discussion in literature. English proficiency is a significant issue to this group (Roessingh & Field, 2000). Classroom activities require complicated language skills, thus late arrivals cannot fully participate because of their limited English proficiency (Leǵer & Storch, 2009). Also, lack of historical and cultural

knowledge of events in discussion is another reason (Duff, 2001; Frańquiz, & Cinthia, 2011). Late arrivals do not have enough sociocultural and historical knowledge of events in discussion, which further hinders their active participation in class discussion.

Late-arriving linguistic minority adolescents usually encounter more difficulties at school compared to early arrivals. They experience ethnic peer divide at school (Li, 2009), and cultural and social misunderstandings from teachers (Chuang, 2010). English as a Second Language (ESL) programs impact positively on ESL learners' academic progress (Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller & Frisco, 2009; Cummins, 1981; Roessingh, 2006, 2008), and their social network. Viewed as a safe place, ESL classes become a space for them to socialize with people out of their own ethnic group (Duff, 2001; Harklau, 2000). Yet this group tends to have a negative attitude toward ESL courses due to its separation from regular classes (Harklau, 1994). In social interactions with English speaking people, Gagne and Soto Gordon (2012) found that ELLs tend to refer to issues of their personalities, English proficiency, and lack of sociocultural knowledge of North America in regards to their social interaction with English-speaking counterparts.

There have been more efforts linking language learning to mathematics, sciences or other courses that late arrivals are usually good at (Duff, 2001; Roessingh & Field, 2000). Feeling benefit in general from such attempts at language learning (Chen, 1996; Soto Gordon, 2010), this group still feels isolated at school socially (Chuang, 2010; Derwing et al., 1999).

4.1 Code-switching in content subject courses

Code-switching is referred to using two languages in an unchanged setting, usually within the same utterance (Bullock &Toribio, 2009). It is considered a by-product of language contact, which usually occurs in multilingual communities, and between in-group members (Garner-Chloros, 2009; Kamwangamalu, 2010). Code-switching consolidates membership of a linguistic community (Liang, 2006), and assists learners' learning (Cummins, 2009; Zheng, 2009). Liang (2006) found that code-switching arouses a dilemma related to conflicting memberships between L1 and L2 language communities.

Code-switching reveals lived experience occurring in certain social cultural contexts (Curdt-Christianse, 2007; Morris, 2007; Zheng, 2009). Linguistic minority students tend to mix two or three languages, based on the context of situation, in particular the topic and interlocutors. In Curdt-Christianse's (2007) study, multiple language learners wrote different events in French, Chinese or English, since those events happen in different languages. By appropriating the context and lived experience, ELLs in Lam's (2004) study developed their mixed-coded language use in a chat room, which enhanced their English fluency and accuracy to assist communication.

5.   METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study concentrates on the impacts of social, political or other contextual facts on issues of study (Stake, 2005), and focuses on contemporary events. Researchers usually have no control of behavioural events (Yin, 2009). This approach allows researchers to understand real-life events from a holistic and meaningful perspective (Yin, 1994). Thus, it is ideal to exam the complexity of a social group or a phenomenon, within which it is impossible to separate variables from the context (Merriam, 1991).

The researcher translated participants' interviews from Mandarin into English, and invited her colleague in China to examine the translation. This colleague had completed her doctoral degree in Applied Linguistics in a well-known university in Asia, and had been an English as a Foreign language teacher at university level for more than 10 years. Knowing both languages and having a deep understanding of Chinese learners' preference of expression, this colleague was an ideal person to proof read the translation. In case of different opinions in regard to translation, the researcher discussed with this colleague until a mutual agreement was reached.

Based on carefully designed protocol, this study employed multiple data collection tools: in-depth interviews, documentation and observation. In-depth interviews enabled participants to provide insights into key issues and present high-quality data sources of relevant evidence (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Johnson, 2001;Yin, 1989). Documentation (Mertens, 1998) and direct observation (Alder & Alder, 1994) were also used to collect other sources of evidence for the purpose of triangulation. Documentation included participants' narrative writing and the researcher's field notes. Narratives in this study referred to a life story (Riessman, 2008), which produced accurate accounts of events in life which are meaningful (Clandinin& Connelly, 2000). Field notes were taken after each interview with a participant, to record nonverbal details during the interview. Field notes were also taken after the researcher's unplanned online chatting and phone conversations with participants. Direct observation ranged from formal to casual data collection activities (Lee, 2000; Yin, 1989). It included observations of meetings, classrooms or a field visit in a geographical environment as well as a virtual space.

6.   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative research is generally inductive, which involves data consolidation, combination, reduction and interpretation (Miles &Huberman, 1994). Mixed coding analysis was used for data analysis (Johnson &LaMontagne, 1993;Riessman, 2008). Data from interviews was first categorized. Mixed codes were used in identifying patterns and themes from each category. Data from observation, field notes as well as other resources was used to triangulate themes and patterns from interview data. After the triangulation, patterns and themes were used to identify causal and effectual connections to research questions.

7.   FINDINGS

This section presents the findings regarding participants' language use in ESL classes, English literature classes and content subject classes.

7.1 ESL Classes

ESL class became a socially inclusive space for participants. Amanda felt that the ESL course was more relaxing and comfortable, since the whole class comprised of immigrant youth. Chatting with ESL classmates appears more

> "*舒服。容易很多*. (It's) comfortable. It is a lot easier."

Like Amanda, Kira found more friends from ESL courses, where the friendships lasted through her high school. When asked the reason, Kira explained,

> "*因为ESL班上都是从别的国家来的嘛*. Since (classmates) in ESL courses were from different parts of the world."

Yet, participants tended to perceive ESL courses a waste of time, since some of the courses appeared too easy. Tony did not feel any pressure from ESL courses either.

> "*因为ESL,所以就没有那么大的压力。然后就很少说。就坐那一节课，可*
>
> *能就结束了*. Because it is ESL, there isn't much pressure. (I) seldom talk. (I) just sit there for the whole class, and (that) ends (a day)."

When he started Grade 11 regular English classes, he started to feel the challenge of English language. Some participants chose to switch schools to quickly be placed at a regular class. Amanda's experience was an evident example. While at ESL E, she felt this course did not address her needs at the stage since the course mainly focused on grammar. She quickly switched to other schools in hope of being placed at a higher level. However, in our interviews, she regretted that she was impatient at that time.

Amanda:
> *现在看到文章发下来，看见自己语法错误，觉得如果ESL花时间多一点的*
>
> *话*…Now when (I) see (the comments of) my writing assignment, seeing those grammatical mistakes, I feel if I had spent more time for ESL courses…

The Researcher:
> *所以你会建议后来的人在ESL上多花一点时间？*So you suggest people coming later spending more time on ESL?

Amanda:
> *嗯*. Yes.

Yet, the sense of "having-no-time" for ESL classes was found among participants. Amanda had an English teacher in her 12th grade immigrated to Canada before 10 years old. This teacher was fully aware of English requirements in higher education, thus he explained to the class that currently their English was not competent enough for university education. This teacher further suggested to them that they should take one more year of secondary high school education in order to improve their English. Yet, Amanda and her classmates were not convinced. They did not feel that they could spend more time in secondary high school education.

7.2 English literature classes as "their class"

Participants in the present study reported being silent in class, and offered several reasons for their actions in this regard. Kira believed she had a problem understanding English literature, since she always interpreted English literature differently from her English-speaking counterparts. She felt uncertain when her opinion was different.

> "*我的理解个样子，他们的理解是那个样子，所以呢就不敢发言了.*My understanding is like this, and their understanding is like that. Then I do not have the courage to state (my opinions)."

When the researcher asked Kira why she did not feel proud of a different perception, she said

> "*但是他们是* majority *嘛. But they are the **majority**."

The sense of uncertainty does not only stem from different opinions; it is also because of the lack of knowledge regarding Canadian literature. In a class discussion, Joe, Justin and David were not sure whether their opinions were right or not, as a result of which they would rather keep silent. As Justin explained,

> "*对加拿大文学不熟悉，理解不足以作评论.* (I) don't have sufficient understanding about Canadian literature to an extent that I can make a comment."

In line with findings from a study conducted by Alford (2001), Kira attributed her silence to the fact that she lacked the critical thinking skills essential for class discussion, and reported that she did not know how to engage in activities that required critical thinking as these were not taught in her school curriculum in China.

> "*在初中我们不会研究一个文学作品怎么去分析，然后就再写作文，但是刚来这里他们这儿就开始已经习惯了那种东西，然后我就完全不理解.* In Junior high, we did not analyse literature and write an essay. But when I just came here, they are used to that type of practice. So I totally don't understand.*"

Some youth participants did not feel included in group or class discussion. In some courses, in particular a class with dominantly English-speaking counterparts, partic-

ipants felt excluded from class or group discussion. As Ivana and Amanda specified, their group members did not intend to include them in group discussion.

> "*他们知道你是来学英语的*. They knew you come to learn English (from Amanda's interview)".

Participants also stressed that such exclusion was because of their quiet personalities. They believed that it was because they were too shy to participate in class activities, thus they became a quiet group in classes.

Interestingly, classroom seating had an impact on participants' preference of participation as well. Kira liked to discuss with students sitting beside her, rather than those sitting on the other side of the class. To her, talking to someone sitting across the class was in essence talking to the majority of the class. On the other hand, talking to a student sitting beside her was talking to her close friends. Thus, while she appeared quiet to the majority of the class, she constantly exchanged her opinions with students sitting beside her.

7.3 Content subject classes as "our classes"

While ELL adolescents in this study were more likely to be quiet in English Literature and Social Studies classes, they were also found to be more actively participating in core classes (e.g., Math and Science classes). Participants believed that they learned the subject knowledge from science courses and other content subject courses, while they improved English proficiency from taking English courses. As late arrivals, they believed it was to learn English that they came to North America. As David explained,

> "*就学英语，别的也没什么好学的*.（We came）to learn English, nothing else."

However, they avoided taking courses requiring more weight on English language, because they usually received lower marks on courses of English literature and social studies.

Participants were more active in content subjects, mostly Math, Chemistry and Physics. One reason is that participants usually excelled at the content of those courses, thus it became more comfortable participating. They were more likely to get a higher mark. Also, they felt the language for the content subjects was easier than English or other courses on arts and social studies. As Tony explained,

> "*像这种理科的，有公式的就好一点*. Like those courses on science, it is easier with a formula."

As he further explained,

> "*数学课你不用很难的英语。老师问问题，你就告诉答案就行了。不需要很美的语言*. You don't need complicated English for Math classes. If a teacher asks questions, you only need to tell the answer. It doesn't need metaphoric language."

Yet, participants felt puzzled when writing assignments for those courses. Joe felt frustrated by his marks from chemistry lab reports, in that he was not sure whether it was because of his English writing skills or his performance in lab experiment.

> *"我就是很头疼，不知道是我写作的问题，还是我实验做得不好的问题.* I have a headache since I am not sure if it is because of my English writing, or because my performance on experiments isn't good."

David also met difficulties in Chemistry school work. He knew how the work should be done, yet he could not express the ideas well in English.

> *"中国都学过那些原理什么的，就表达不出来.* I've learned those theories in China, but I just cannot explain (in English)."

Participants claimed more frequent use of L1 in content subject classes. Participants usually discussed with other Chinese classmates in those classes in Chinese, since they believed that students from cross-ethnic backgrounds would not be able to follow their discussion. Ivana claimed Math class as "our class" since Chinese students were usually more advanced in Maths, and also usually there were a larger number of Chinese students in those courses. She felt proud to use Mandarin with her Mandarin-speaking classmates. In group discussions, even though some students started discussion in English, the group would eventually switch to Mandarin.

The researcher*:*

> *你有什么时候在学校用中文比较多？*Is there any class that you use more Chinese than English?

Ivana:

> *可能是数学课。因为数学课中国人比较多。而且，重点是因为白人数学*
>
> *没我们好，我们肯定不会跟他们…我们肯定跟自己…*Maths. Usually there are more Chinese students in the class. Most of all, usually white students are not as good at Maths as us, thus we won't discuss with them on Maths problems. We definitely discuss with our own (people)…

8.   DISCUSSION: "THEIR CLASS" AND "OUR CLASS"

Many studies (Barwell, 2005; Brown, 2007; Case, 2002) found that ELLs encounter more difficulties in content subject classes because of the English barrier. Thus, it is necessary to incorporate ELLs' L1 into content-subject learning, so that their cognitive development will not be hindered due to limited English proficiency (Cummins, 2000). However, this study found that participants had different learning experiences at school. While participants had received rigorous content subject education in their home country, the challenges they encountered in North America were in English Literature or Social Studies, the courses which are more embedded in North American sociocultural and historical backgrounds.

Existing research has shown that the perceptions of affiliation to a class in school can impact learners' participation (Leger &Storch, 2009) and their "perceived proficiency" (Martin-Beltrán, 2010),where social practice in daily life positions attributions of proficiency, ELL learners' participation and social relations. This study found that participants positioned themselves differently in literature classes, ESL class and content-subject classes, due to the subject contents, social practice and language use in those classes. Their sense of affiliation to those social spaces was determined by perceived competence, the majority and minority dynamics (Andersson, 2003), and preferred language use in classes.

8.1 "Their class":a class of their text and their symbolic capital.

Participants in this study viewed literature classes as "their class", where "their history" and "their topics" were discussed. In this class, they felt the urge to keep silent because of the sense of foreignness and the language barrier as well as their perception of their status as a linguistic minority. Mostly, participants believed that it was their own issues (i.e., personalities or limited English skills) that led to their silence in the class. This perception resonates with some studies in identifying ELLs' language use at school. It is believed that this group is more inclined to stick to their own ethnic group, and be resistant to full integration (Duff, 2001). Thus, it is their sole responsibility to change their personality and social practice in order to be more active in class.

Yet, some studies pointed out that when the content of a class is disconnected from learners' life experience, when discussing the history of North America and White dominant culture (He, Phillion, Chan & Xu, 2008), learners tend to feel excluded. The content of classes positions them as outsiders. The findings of my study support this claim. In fact, participants were quiet in class activities because they felt foreign in the English Literature class, since they regarded those classes as 'theirs'. Feeling a lack of historical and sociocultural knowledge of North America which was being discussed (Duff, 2001; Frańquiz, & Cinthia, 2011), participants felt that they did not have enough cultural, sociocultural and historical knowledge to actively participate in class discussions. Further, they did not feel they could raise a different voice. As Justin mentioned, "(I) don't have sufficient understanding about Canadian literature to an extent that I can make a comment."

Other than the class content, social relations in the class is also an important factor determining participation. Participants positioned themselves, and were positioned, as the linguistic minority, a deficient role because of their English proficiency, which further undermined their role in the class. In interaction with English-speaking counterparts, participants experienced social isolation. In particular, in a class with a majority of students as English-speaking counterparts, linguistic minority students are not always invited to group discussions (Chuang, 2010). As Amanda explained, "They knew we came to learn English." In this regard, English becomes a

dominant symbolic capital, shaping learners' social relations due to their varied access.

Studies have discussed the dynamics between the dominant groups and the ethnic minority in class discussions (Andersson, 2003; Taylor, 2006). In English-dominant classes, the dynamics between the English-dominant groups and the linguistic minority groups led to the minority group's silence. The silence reveals ELLs' perception as a linguistic minority in English Literature or Social Studies classes. In a class where nearly all students are from a dominant background, it is not uncommon for the minority to stay silent when their opinions differ from the majority's. Moreover, having such different opinions represented a disagreement with the majority. In particular, when talking about classes about the mainstream's history and literature, participants were less likely to disagree with the majority, since they did not feel they had the right to disagree. In essence, when a class is discussing the history of the majority, it usually has one dominant discourse in interpreting such history. A different opinion is in essence a different discourse in response to the dominant discourse. In fact, adolescent participants tended to equate having a different opinion with having a wrong opinion. Also, some adolescent participants did not just keep silent. They seemed to internalize the belief that it was their "problem" that they thought differently from dominant students.

Hadi-Tabassum (2006) discusses the symbolic meaning that is granted by classroom geographical layout and routine activities. The seating in a classroom can be a factor affecting participation as well. Speaking to someone across the classroom in a class is in essence speaking to someone socially distant. Kira felt intimidated if she had to speak to students sitting across the class. Rather, she usually talked to students sitting beside her.

8.2 "Our classes"

Compared to regular classes, participants considered their ESL classes a more relaxing space, since classmates were all ELLs who arrived in North American recently. This resonates with current studies that the ESL class is perceived by ELLs as a socially inclusive place because of its friendly social interactions (Anderson, 2002; Duff, 2001; Harklau, 2000; Soto Gordon, 2010). Moreover, such connection is more likely to extend beyond the classroom. When all ELLs in ESL classes are new to the school and to the dominant social practice, they are more likely to be engaged in shared sociocultural activities. While considering English-speaking counterparts as "they", ELLs are more likely to define each other as "we" (Soto Gordon, 2010), because all learners are positioned, and position themselves, the same in relation to the dominant social practice.

However, other than a positive attitude toward social interactions, ELLs' attitude toward ESL programs is usually more resistant (Harklau, 1994), because of the dominant peers' perception of ESL classes (Soto Gordon, 2010), social segregation of ESL programs from regular classes (Duff, 2005), and their suspicion of ESL pro-

gram outcomes (Roessingh, 2006). Participants in this study do not evaluate ESL programs highly because of the curriculum which is disconnected from their school life in other classes.

Late-arriving adolescents usually have high L1. Their experience as an advance language user in L1 shapes their perception of language use as a young adult in a new society. Also, due to the stage of their social psychological development, their social needs are more significant. Yet, ESL programs do not effectively address their needs in social interactions as the linguistic minority at school.

8.3 Math and content subject classes: "we are the dominant"

Participants in this study perceived Math or relevant content subject classes as "our class" since they generally excelled in those courses. They became a group other students usually sought for advice when they encountered a difficult task in those courses. In this regard, this group had more access to the symbolic capital dominant in content subject classes, where they became a dominant group. Also, due to different language genre used in content subject classes (Clark, Touchman, Martinez-Garza, Ramire-Marin &Drews, 2012), this group felt that English was no longer a factor interfering with their full participation.

It has been shown when ELLs use L1 for context-reduced activities, they are making up for their limited English proficiency, therefore it has been recommended that ELLs should be encouraged to use L1 in academic related activities (Cummins, 2000; Liang, 1999). However, adolescent participants in my study did not feel that they needed to use L1 to compensate for their deficiency in English. Rather, they used their L1 as a tool to express their superior knowledge of the content and to show their dominance in the core classes. In other words, they attributed their success in these courses to their advanced knowledge of the content, and to the fact that they did not need to discuss core content with their English-speaking peers in English. Rather as Ivana pointed out in her interview, they could succeed by only communicating with their "own people" in their "own language". Further, participants believed that the focus of content subject courses was to learn content, rather than the English language. This perception convinced participants that using L1 in those classes would not hinder learning, in that it was the content knowledge rather than English that they should learn from those courses. Thus, they usually discussed these subjects in Chinese with other Chinese classmates in class, since students from cross-ethnic backgrounds would not be able to follow their discussion.

9.   IMPLICATIONS

In summary, adolescent participants in this study viewed classes of English literature and Social Studies as "their" classes, and core classes as "our" classes. While many complicated factors emerged as contributing to varied levels of engagement,

the dynamics between the majority and minority groups seemed to be the most significant factor influencing participation in the two types of classes. Such dynamics in this study were shown to shape, and be shaped by, the background knowledge required in the courses, required English proficiency and peer interactions. The findings suggest that a school has multiple social spaces while English space is perceived as a broader and dominant one. Participants in this study perceived school as multiple spaces, within which they perceived their affiliation differently due to their relation to course content, social practice and social relations in and across classes.

Social practice at a particular time and place shapes the nature of a social space (Pennycook, 2010). English literature class, ESL class and content subject class are by nature three different social spaces, within which different social practices are enabled and prioritized. In English classes, late-arriving adolescents are positioned as a group of deficient learners, and they position themselves as outsiders. It is believed that they should not move on to the next stage until their English becomes proficient. Yet, it needs to be questioned whether English literature class is content-based teaching or an English-language class (Creese, 2005), where learners learn the literature of North America, or learn a language used by English communities of North America. In this regard, this group is in a double-cross fire (Cummins, 2000). They are excluded by both the content and the English language barrier in English classes. On the other hand, content subject classes become more inclusive to this group. While knowledge of the content is central, English is a mediational tool linking learners to content knowledge (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). With advanced prior learning in content subject knowledge, this group has closer access to the symbolic capital of the class. In actuality, they position themselves as the group having dominant symbolic capital. In this regard, the use of L1 symbolizes a stronger connection to this group.

While English language proficiency has been traditionally perceived as a prerequisite factor in school learning, it is generally believed that ELLs cannot learn content subject knowledge because of their limited English proficiency. This study found that this does not apply to late arrivals who have completed a majority of content subject courses in L1 in their home country. Further, this study wishes to point out that, ELLs, in particular late-arriving ELL adolescents, do not necessarily perceive themselves as passive and deficient language users at school. Other than categorizing ELLs as a broad group, this study suggests late-arriving ELLs should be looked at as a unique group. Due to their prior learning experience in L1 context, their needs can be very different from other groups. When current studies tend to identify ELL learners' use of L1 as a symbol of limited English deficiency and resistance to integrate, this study found that the use of L1 can be a resistance to dominant discourse on ELLs. In this regard, it needs to identify the class as a social space, and further exam how social practice and social relations in a class include/exclude ELLs.

In addition to the English used across different classes, dynamics between the majority and minority groups in core classes were different from classes of English literature or Social Studies. In core classes, Chinese students became a group to whom other students would seek advice when they encountered difficulties in those courses. The notion of majority changed from being a member of the ethnic-dominant group to being an expert in the subject matter under study. Being a majority in this way in such classes made adolescent participants feel that they were more active participants.

This study suggests a core-class based ESL program, which is different from programs that some studies have discussed. Current studies (Carrier & Tatum, 2006; Pawan, 2008; Pawan & Ortloff, 2011) attempted to break English barriers for ELL learners, in order for this group to learn course contents (e.g., Math and Science). Yet, this study found that late arrivals can be in a different situation. Because of their previous education history, they probably have acquired advanced knowledge in content subjects, yet it is English proficiency that needs to be improved. Therefore, this study suggests that, instead of lacking both the content knowledge of English literature and English proficiency in literature based ESL programs, late arrivals will have core-class based ESL programs which have fewer barriers because they are usually experts in content knowledge yet only in need of improving their English proficiency.

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