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# *“Breaking Them Up, Taking Them Away”: ESL Students in Grade 1*

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This article describes a longitudinal ethnographic research project in a Grade 1 classroom enrolling L2 learners and Anglophones. Using a community-of-practice perspective rarely applied in L2 research, the author examines three classroom practices that she argues contribute to the construction of L2 learners as individuals and as such reinforce traditional second language acquisition perspectives. More importantly, they serve to differentiate participants from one another and contribute to community stratification. In a stratified community in which the terms of stratification become increasingly visible to all, some students become defined as deficient and are thus systematically excluded from just those practices in which they might otherwise appropriate identities and practices of growing competence and expertise.

*I said: “Some people do know more than others. That contributes to the impression that someone, somewhere, knows the whole thing.”*

*“Neapolitans know a lot,” said Gianni. “But they know it collectively. Break them up, take them away, and they’re hopeless, just as stupid as anyone else. It’s the city, the phenomenon of Naples itself, that knows something.” (Hazzard, 1970, p. 38)*

In a recent special-topic issue of *TESOL Quarterly* devoted to qualitative L2 education research, Davis (1995) argues that most second language acquisition (SLA) studies typically investigate L2 learning from the perspectives of “mentalism, behaviorism, and individualism” (p. 428).<sup>1</sup> In such work, the concern is to investigate the processes by which individuals internalize aspects of the target language, and the notions of individual, internalization, and target language are taken to be

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<sup>1</sup> Wertsch (1991) similarly observes that much contemporary research in psychology “examines human mental functioning as if it exists in a cultural, institutional, historical vacuum” (p. 2).

unproblematic and uncontested.<sup>2</sup> Willett (1995) notes that this individualistically oriented SLA research has neither given conclusive results nor adequately accounted theoretically for the “complex social context that interpenetrate individual functioning” (p. 474). Davis notes that there has been a “dearth of socially situated SLA studies” that would view acquisition “not only as a mental individualistic process, but one that is embedded in the sociocultural contexts in which it occurs” (p. 432).

Like Willett, Davis, and others, I am interested in how the learning of L2s can be conceptualized and investigated as situated cultural, institutional, and historical practices. My research, using a perspective based on sociocultural theories of children’s development, investigates Canadian public school classrooms in which young children learn ESL over time. I wish to contribute to a discussion in which L2 learning and teaching are investigated in such a way as to include centrally the “social, cultural and political dynamics of second language classrooms” (Pennycook, 1990, p. 16). Using a community-of-practice perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995) rarely applied in L2 learning research, I see the children in my study adopting community practices for using and interpreting oral and written English through participation in the social life of the classrooms in which they spend their time.

In this article I illustrate how three classroom practices I observed in a specific context constructed L2 learners as individuals and, as such, reinforced the traditional SLA perspective. I argue that the individualizing practices of this classroom, as they differentiated participants from one another, contributed to practices of community stratification. Finally, I argue that in a stratified community in which the terms of the stratification become increasingly visible to all, some students become defined as deficient and are thus systematically excluded from just those practices in which they might otherwise appropriate identities and practices of growing competence and expertise.

## LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) examination of learning and social practices begins with what they call *communities of practice*: the relations between groups of people engaged in specific, local, historically con-

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<sup>2</sup> Here I will deal mainly with problems associated with a focus on individuals. Clearly, important future work will focus on problems with the notions of language and internalization that have heretofore informed such work. Lave and Wenger (1991) take up the matter of internalization, as does Packer (1993).

structed, and changing practices. From their perspective, communities of practice include old-timers and newcomers, and learning is a process whereby newcomers to a community participate in attenuated ways with old-timers in the performance of community practices. The notion of “legitimate peripheral participation” (p. 29) is suggested by Lave and Wenger to describe the engagement of participants who have varying degrees of familiarity with the practices of the community in those practices.

Recognizing that participants in any specific community might well have unequal access to particular identities, practices, and community resources, Lave and Wenger (1991) note that the “social structure of the community of practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e. for legitimate peripheral participation)” (p. 98). Despite their recognition of the varieties of power relations (instantiated in community practices) that are possible in communities, their discussion of legitimate peripheral participation includes an analysis of only two sorts of participants: newcomers and old-timers, involved in “learning trajectories” (p. 36), by which they move toward “full participation” (p. 37) as they engage in community practices over time. Possible difficulties with this characterization, at least in the contexts with which I am familiar, are discussed later.

In the classrooms in which I observed, I examined participants (including myself) as members of communities of practice. From this perspective, L2 learners are seen as participants situated in one or more particular local communities and engaging in the practices of those communities. The practices of any particular local community might differ from those of other local communities. In a kindergarten community in which I observed, the identities, social practices, and resources available to two L2 learners appeared to be distributed such that their active verbal participation in the classroom was not essential and even could be seen as detrimental to their obtaining desired social ends there (Toohey, 1996).<sup>3</sup> Conceptualizing L2 learning as a process of moving from being an outsider to being an insider (marked either centrally or coincidentally by growing individual proficiency in the L2) was much too simple a way to describe at least these children’s experiences in their classroom. These children were inside by virtue of their presence in the

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<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to engage in this discussion in any detail here, but I believe it important to examine how students are assigned to ESL identities as well as to other stigmatized identities. In the classroom in which I observed, not all students who were designated as speakers of languages other than English were deemed to require special help. Randy, who spoke Punjabi as an L1, was considered one of the highest achieving of all students (including Anglophones) in the classroom I focus on here. In November, Randy moved to another school, in which his teacher considered him one of the most “dramatically affected ESL students” she had ever taught.

classroom (as legitimate peripheral participants), but inside was not a place wherein participants moved inexorably toward fuller and more powerful participation.

Mehan (1993) proposes a way of working from this perspective: "In this line of work, people's everyday practices are examined for the way in which they exhibit, indeed, generate, the social structures of the relevant domain" (p. 243). Examining specific community practices in situations wherein some participants are *a priori* defined as L2 learners may allow one to see in more useful detail the social structures of these domains. In addition, L2 educators might examine these everyday practices to assess their social justice and to consider whether they might or should be accepted, resisted, or changed by particular participants over time.

## SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

The school in which this study was conducted was located on a busy four-lane suburban street near a large shopping mall in western Canada. The streets around the mall area were considered to be fairly dangerous because of youth violence at night, but during the day people considered the area simply busy because of the mall, other businesses, and a great deal of vehicular traffic leading to and from a nearby highway. The school catchment area residences were mixed: Low-rent, well-maintained townhouses lined the busy street with similarly well-kept single family dwellings located on the streets behind. The school itself was old and run-down; its demolition and the construction of a new school building had been delayed because of a government funding freeze. Most classrooms enrolled children from a wide range of L1 backgrounds: There were children who spoke Polish, Persian, Kurdish, Spanish, Japanese, Cantonese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and other Southeast Asian languages as L1s. In almost every classroom in the school, about half of the enrollment consisted of children whose home/first languages were other than English.

I closely observed initially six and finally four children in this school from the beginning of their kindergarten year in October 1994 until the end of their Grade 2 year in June 1997. Selected as subjects in kindergarten were Harvey,<sup>4</sup> whose parents spoke Teochew as an L1; Amy, whose L1 was Cantonese; Julie and Adam, whose L1 was Polish; and Surjeet and Randy, whose L1 was Punjabi. In September 1995 these children were placed together in a Grade 1 classroom of 22 children, 11

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<sup>4</sup> To protect the confidentiality of the subjects and teachers, all proper names used in this account are pseudonyms.

of whom were designated as ESL students.<sup>5</sup> The bilingual students in the Grade 1 classroom at the beginning of the year spoke Polish (three students), Tagalog (one student), Cantonese (four students), Punjabi (two students), and Hindi (one student). The children's classroom teacher, Ms. Jones, was bilingual in English and French, was in her third year of teaching, and had had most of her previous public school teaching experience in teaching ESL pullout classes. Five of the bilingual students (Surjeet, Amy, Adam, and two others) were removed from the classroom for about 40 minutes two mornings a week for instruction by an ESL specialist. Another student, the Tagalog speaker, had not attended kindergarten in Canada and was deemed to have such severe English deficiencies that he was pulled out on his own. In an interview, the ESL teacher said that she had decided to work with her ESL charges outside of their classroom because "there [were] such dramatic behaviour difficulties on the part of the other children, they [the ESL students] needed a break." Ms. Jones' class had a reputation among some of the other teachers in the school as a particularly difficult group of children, and four of the students in the class saw the school counselor regularly.<sup>6</sup>

I visited this school for 3 school years, observing the same group of subjects in kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2. I kept field notes of my observations and tape-recorded the children's conversations during my weekly, half-day visits. I very rarely interacted with the children and tried hard to be an unobtrusive observer. Tape recordings of the children's interactions with one another were selectively transcribed. Once a month, the class was videotaped by a professional technician. The children's classroom teacher was interviewed formally three times over the course of the year. The ESL teacher was interviewed formally once in December, and informal discussions with the classroom and ESL teachers took place throughout the year.

Like the children and the teacher, I was a legitimate peripheral participant in the classroom community. I became dramatically aware in this classroom of the importance of the observer's location or position, not only in terms of my identity as an adult and a researcher (and the freedom and power these entail) but also in terms of the positioning of my body vis-à-vis the positioning of the bodies of the children I was watching. The Grade 1 classroom was furnished with individual desks for all the students, unlike their kindergarten classroom, in which they had

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<sup>5</sup> Harvey's parents asked for him to be removed as a subject in the study at the end of kindergarten. Randy moved in November of Grade 1.

<sup>6</sup> One of the students, Harvey, decreased his verbal participation in the classroom over time, apparently learning that his presence in desirable social play events with peers was more likely to be tolerated if he talked less and took a less empowered position in these events. In the case of the other learner, Amy, it was evident that her silence and passivity were no impediment to her access to desirable social play episodes.

selected seating for themselves at round and rectangular tables. The boundaries of the desks were perceptually distinct, the spaces between desks were regulated, and joining a child at a desk felt much more intrusive to me than joining a group of children at a table, where the boundaries of each child's individual space were much less distinct. The desks were strung out in three rows across the room. As an adult and a researcher, I could legitimately move around the room with much more freedom than could any of the children. However, the aisles between the desks were very narrow, and it was difficult for an adult to move quickly or easily between them and to hear children who were at any distance. In addition, because of an injury that made it difficult for me to move easily, I became even more acutely aware that a classroom's spatial arrangements affect the movement and activity (and thus the knowledge) of participants who are not legitimately or physically able to move with ease and to choose freely their physical location with respect to others.

Classrooms are busy arenas, and even with limited participation such as mine, field work yielded very rich and extensive data. Observations about the children's physical arrangement, their borrowing and lending practices, and their oral and written copying are foci in this article, but there are, of course, many other ways of describing the data. Physical arrangements were an initial focus for me during the field work as I attempted to understand how activities in this Grade 1 classroom were the same as and different from what I thought I had seen in the children's kindergarten. My growing sense that the community had been broken up to some extent, as well as my own short-lived immobility, made me alert to patterns of placement and mobility. I kept detailed notes on the children's physical location throughout the field work. At the same time that I was developing the conviction that the children were isolated from one another, I began to see examples of actions that contradicted this interpretation: It became apparent to me that some children were actively using the act of borrowing to sustain frequent interactions with one another. I also made detailed notes on borrowing excursions (described below). As I observed the borrowing and lending of material goods, I began also to think about the borrowing and lending of intellectual property in the classroom, and this led me to document copying practices in the field observations.

Subsequently I examined field notes with regard to these matters, and I isolated, classified, and analyzed borrowing, lending, and copying episodes. In addition, the very high quality of the videotapes allowed repeated and systematic analysis of incidences of the practises of interest.<sup>7</sup> Both my research assistants and I examined the videotapes to see if

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<sup>7</sup> The video technician had videotaped the study children since their kindergarten year and had had a great deal of experience videotaping classrooms.

the interaction on them corroborated or contradicted the patterns I believed evident in the field notes. In the descriptions of the practises below, I provide examples in which a particular practise was suspended or contradicted by other practises in the room. In addition, I solicited the teacher's opinions about the accuracy of the observations.

The researcher's view from the back and sides of the classroom, where one bears no responsibility for maintaining order or accomplishing legally binding educational objectives, can be, I believe, radically different from the teacher's view. In addition, a researcher's perspective is often constructed a good deal later in time than the teacher's, whose work with (different) children continues. Informal conversations throughout the field work allowed me to check impressions and matters of fact with the teacher as they came up, and I solicited Ms. Jones' overall impression of my perspective in response to a draft of this article.

Ms. Jones believed that my descriptions of the children's behaviour and the classroom practices were accurate. She felt that the specific practises of her classroom had been necessary because of its specific circumstances, which she interpreted somewhat differently than I did. She mentioned that she had been acutely aware that her classroom was located immediately adjacent to the school library and to an intermediate classroom, and she felt this placement meant she had to be extra vigilant in making sure her students were not noisy or disruptive. She also thought that the particular combination of children in her classroom presented extra challenges.

1. If you're teaching an ESL group of kids . . . you want them in groups where there's a lot of talking and dialogue going on. And as encouraging as much language use, even if it's like sharing, getting up out of your desk and running around the classroom. But for a regular Grade 1 classroom, when you have such a mix and behaviour problems, if you allow that kind of freedom, you know . . . it's chaos. So that's why I didn't allow it to happen. But ideally, if you have the right combination of kids and it's an ESL classroom, by all means, groups and talk, talk, talk. But when you have behaviour problems, ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] kids who are disruptive, you're asking for trouble, because those kids need as much structure as possible. (IN, Gr1T, 1997)<sup>8</sup>

The teacher also felt that, because she was relatively new to the school and was to be evaluated internally that year, her practices needed to be congruent with those of the other teachers in the school. These constraints were not salient to me as I focused closely on the group of

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<sup>8</sup> Interview transcripts are identified by IN, followed by a brief description of the individual interviewed and the date. Field notes are indicated by FN, followed by the date on which they were taken and the page number from which the excerpt is taken.



children in the room, and they underline the differences in our perspectives. Nevertheless, feeling more comfortable in her milieu, after that school year Ms. Jones was planning instruction for the next year's students that she felt would more closely reflect her own beliefs, and she expressed an interest in exploring alternative practices especially with regard to management of the physical and intellectual resources of the classroom.

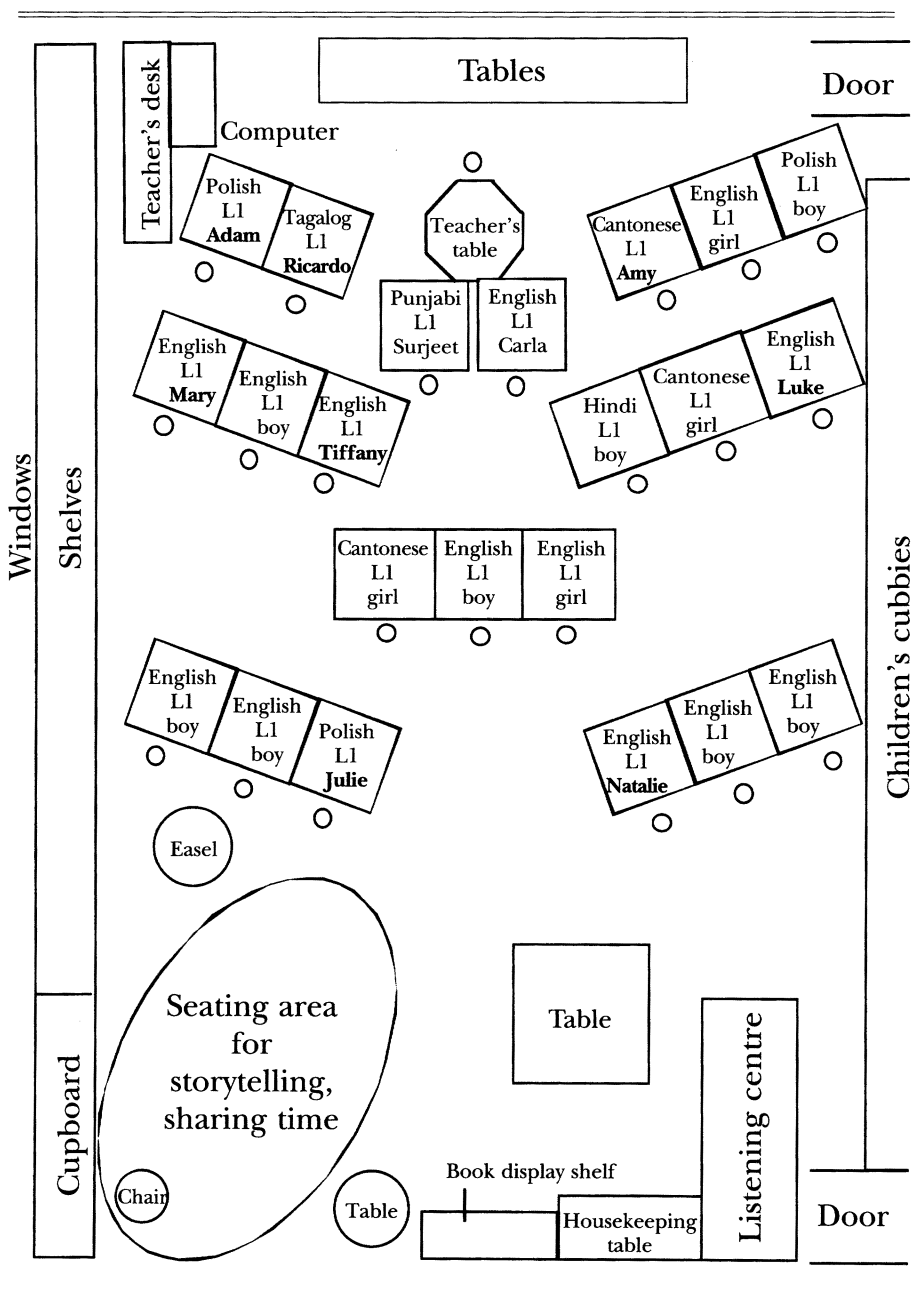
## **PRACTICES IN GRADE 1**

I believe three practices of the classroom community in which I observed contributed to the *breaking up* of the children; that is, the reinforcement of the conviction that each child was an individual learner who, on his or her own, negotiated classroom life and internalized more or less efficiently the intellectual (and linguistic) resources provided by the classroom teacher. The practices examined here include (a) the location of participants, (b) the management of the material, and (c) the source of the intellectual resources needed to complete school tasks. None of these practices is in any way unusual in the primary classrooms with which I am familiar, although they are somewhat different from the practices in the children's kindergarten classroom. I wish to explore my perceptions of how these practices in this particular locale affected the group of students I observed.

### **Sitting at Your Own Desk**

The physical placement of participants in a classroom is one of those everyday practices "which . . . exhibit, indeed, generate the social structures of the relevant domain" (Mehan, 1993, p. 243). Figure 1 shows the placement of furniture in the Grade 1 classroom and the seating arrangement of the children with regard to the LIs of the children and the placement of the students. Students who are referred to in this article are identified by name in the figure. Although the teacher had enacted several other arrangements, this one was the most long lived, prevailing from the end of February to the end of the school year in June. The teacher's customary position is also noted, and it was her position and the direction in which the children faced that established the "front" of the room. As an observer, I moved around the room at will, sitting or standing beside the children I was observing. In Grade 1, at the beginning of the year the teacher assigned the children to individual desks, and when the children were engaged in many classroom activities,

FIGURE 1  
Grade 1 Classroom



the understanding was that they were to remain at those desks unless otherwise directed.<sup>9</sup>

Commonly in classrooms, teachers assign seating to children on the basis of matters to do with management (e.g., they do not put two noisy friends beside one another, they put a noisy child beside a quiet one, they keep children who are unlikely to complete assignments or who might be suspected of daydreaming closer to the teacher's customary position). Ms. Jones remarked that such considerations guided her decision making in this Grade 1 classroom, and as she received new information about children, as new children joined or left the class, and as she devised new strategies for encouraging them to complete tasks, she announced and enacted new seating arrangements. The children collaborated with the teacher in enforcing the classroom practice with regard to staying at one's own desk.

2. Luke: Can we work at somebody else's desks?

Ms. Jones: No, you work at your own desk. That's why you have one. (FN 2.1.96.11)

3. [Surjeet goes over to Amy's desk.]

John: Surjeet, get in your desk! (FN 2.8.96.29)

Figure 1 shows that many of the children learning ESL in this classroom were seated near the front of the room and that no children speaking the same L1s (other than English) were seated together.<sup>10</sup> Some of the Anglophone children were seated beside and among the bilingual children; these Anglophone children were perceived by the teacher not to be managing well the demands of the Grade 1 curriculum. With these children closer to the position she most commonly occupied at the central hexagonal table, the teacher felt she was more easily able to help them. It was evident that she was able to monitor the conversations and actions of those children closely. The Anglophone children whom the teacher perceived to be clearly in no danger of difficulties in school were seated on the right at the back of the room. They were observed engaging in lengthy conversations with one another, conversations that mostly went uninterrupted by the teacher. Natalie, for example, frequently read and described to her neighbours the plots of the chapter books she was reading.

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<sup>9</sup> Early in the school year, one of the children in the classroom was diagnosed with head lice. The children's desks were moved farther away from one another for a couple of weeks, in the same arrangement, in an attempt to inhibit the spread of the mites. Later, the desks were moved closer together so that adjoining desks were touching one another (as illustrated in Figure 1).

<sup>10</sup> In June, the teacher moved a Cantonese-speaking girl behind Amy, but she had not been placed there previously. Except for the movement of this girl, Figure 1 shows the placement of the children from the end of February to the end of June.

Julie (L1 Polish) was seated in a back row; on either side of her were boys with whom she very seldom interacted. Julie was perceived by the teacher to have only minor problems because of her ESL learner status, and she was also perceived to be well behaved. Indeed, Julie was very quiet in the classroom that year, although, as in kindergarten, she continued to appear lively, socially active, and verbal on the playground.

Adam (L1 Polish) was placed at the front corner of the room beside Ricardo, a student who had arrived in September from the Philippines and who was perceived to have the most serious English language deficiencies of all the students in the classroom. Adam was so placed because the teacher felt that she could monitor his completion of tasks more effectively if he were closer to her. It is my impression that Adam spoke very little after he was moved beside Ricardo, who had difficulty both understanding and responding to Adam's initiations.<sup>11</sup>

Surjeet (L1 Punjabi) was seated beside an Anglophone girl who, although verbally active, seldom spoke with Surjeet. Surjeet interacted more with another Anglophone girl seated across the aisle from her to her left (Tiffany) and with another Anglophone girl seated in the same row on the far left (Mary). Surjeet's interactions with Tiffany were mostly friendly, but Mary frequently initiated unfriendly conversations with or about Surjeet.

4. Mary [to Tiffany]: Don't go to Surjeet's birthday. It would be Indian smell. [wrinkling nose]

Tiffany: I won't.

Mary: Will you come to my birthday? I'm Irish.

Tiffany: OK.

[Surjeet covers her ears and turns away.] (FN 2.8.96.28)

Randy (L1 Punjabi) moved away in November, but before his move he was seated at the back of the classroom between two Anglophone boys with whom he had apparently enjoyable, sustained conversations. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Jones considered Randy to be one of her highest achieving students.

Amy (L1 Cantonese) was seated at the front of the room beside an Anglophone girl who was frequently absent. Amy talked to this girl when she was present and to the Polish L1 boy in her row. Her borrowing excursions (described below) afforded her more opportunities to talk to children to whom she wished to talk.

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<sup>11</sup> Typical of their sometimes difficult interactions was this one, recorded on audiotape in March:

Adam: Ricardo, where you got your ruler?

Ricardo: [pause] I got this from store. [shows an "action" figure]

Adam: No! [angry] Ruler!

[Ricardo goes to the back of the room.] (TR 04.14.95.17)

None of the children who were primary subjects of my study was seated beside children with whom they typically chose to play at playtime. None of them was placed beside children who spoke their L1. By placing Adam, Amy, and Surjeet close to her, the teacher could monitor and sometimes terminate conversations with the peers with whom the three did sit. Their seating facilitated conversations with the teacher, but I did not see her holding extended conversations more often with these children than with others.

The children did not always sit at their desks. They also sat daily on the floor at the back of the room for the teacher's readings of stories, discussions, and sharing time. Although Adam, Randy, and Julie were relatively immobile during such times, maintaining what looked like close attention to the speaker, Amy and Surjeet were very mobile, with Surjeet often moving seven or eight times during a 10-minute reading. By the end of the year, both girls were observed to start on the floor but to move to their desks quite soon after the group had assembled itself on the floor, occupying themselves with tidying their desks, drawing, or watching other children.<sup>12</sup>

During the previous year, in kindergarten, the Chinese- and Polish-speaking children I observed had sustained L1 subcommunities within the larger kindergarten community (Toohey, 1996). I wondered if the different physical arrangements of the Grade 1 classroom, as well as other factors, had contributed to the fact that, at least publicly within the classroom, the children very infrequently spoke their L1s except when they were so addressed by their parents when visiting the classroom at school opening or closing.

One of the objectives and effects of placing the children in this way was apparently to restrict some children from conversing with some other children and for the teacher to watch some children more closely than others. On the other hand, as described in the next section, the ways in which the children managed their material resources appeared to provide them with opportunities to resist their physical separation from one another to some extent at least.

## Using Your Own Things

The second practice of interest here has to do with the distribution and management of material resources in the classroom. The children in this classroom (unlike some other primary classrooms, in which re-

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<sup>12</sup> Ms. Jones remarked, on reading a draft of this article, that she found this a common pattern for many of the ESL children she had taught and that she believed it reflected the children's lack of understanding of the stories.

sources are stored and utilized communally) were individually responsible for keeping their resources for task completion (crayons, scissors, rulers, glue sticks, notebooks, and the like) in box-shelves built under their individual desks. The teacher frequently reminded the children of the classroom rule to use their own materials, and some of the children, as well, reminded others.

5. Surjeet: Adam, use your own things, not other people's. (FN 11.15.95.4)

The children in this classroom also engaged in a home reading program in which every day each child took home one of the collection of early literacy readers provided by the school. These books were taken home in addition to those the children selected at the school library once a week.

6. Ms. Jones: Boys and girls, it's silent reading. You each have to have your own book. (FN 2.1.96.14)

The box-shelves in which materials were stored were short vertically, deep, dark, and placed so that the children had to huddle low in their chairs or get out of their chairs and squat on the floor to see inside. The children frequently lost or misplaced their individually owned materials in or outside their desks. In addition, when the children lost or used up some or any of their supplies, they were responsible for telling their parents to replace them. Many children's supplies were incomplete fairly soon after school opening.

Many of the children in this classroom solved their problems with keeping and managing their own inventory of materials by asking other children to lend them materials. Borrowing and lending led to social interaction, some conflict, and physical movement in the classroom. Whereas some children most frequently borrowed from the children sitting next to them, others would move to other children's locations to borrow. The teacher did not always tolerate this movement around the classroom, and the children knew she could terminate their movements.

Julie's and Adam's lending and borrowing practices are somewhat simpler to describe than are those of the other two subject children. Julie and Adam borrowed relatively infrequently, and in no example in the data was Julie asked to lend her materials to others. Adam borrowed reciprocally with Ricardo and occasionally moved across the room to ask the L1 Polish boy sitting at the opposite corner to lend him felt crayons.

Surjeet's and Amy's patterns of borrowing were more complex. Amy initially did not move much around the classroom to borrow, as for some months before the arrangement noted in Figure 1 she was seated by two boys who borrowed reciprocally with her. Later in the year, beginning in February according to the videos and my field notes, Amy began to range

further afield to borrow. She would move around the classroom, lean on the desk of the potential lender, and engage him or her in short conversations. In kindergarten Amy had engaged in a great deal of friendly and affiliating behaviour with other children, and the girls in her kindergarten especially had treated her initiations positively (Toohey, 1996). Small, physically adept, and attractive, Amy had been a welcome peripheral participant in the activities of her kindergarten classmates. Her habits of soliciting connections with other children appeared to survive her physical separation from them, and she borrowed even when she had her own materials easily available. She seldom lent anything to others (and was seldom asked to lend anything); on those infrequent occasions when other children used her things, they went into her desk on their own, with her tacit permission, and retrieved the materials themselves.

Surjeet, unlike Amy, was not always a welcome participant in the activities of other children, either in kindergarten or in her Grade 1 classroom. I have already described Mary's occasional hostile initiations with her. From the middle of February, Surjeet sat beside another Anglophone girl, Carla, who also was occasionally unfriendly toward her. Carla was observed rebuffing Surjeet's conversational advances and refusing to lend her materials. After a few refusals, Surjeet did not solicit the loan of materials from Carla. However, she often borrowed felt crayons from Mary (who was also occasionally hostile) as well as from Tiffany, seated closer beside her. Surjeet had to move a little away from her desk to borrow, especially from Mary, but I did not have the sense that the purpose of her solicitation was primarily to engage the lender in friendly conversation, as it appeared to be with Amy. Rather, Surjeet sometimes seemed fairly tense when borrowing from Mary, as if, I surmised, she was aware that her presence or her request might lead to a hostile remark. She was not apparently tense when exchanging materials with Tiffany; these interactions seemed friendly and easy. Surjeet was an enthusiastic lender and was alert to occasions on which the children seated near her could use one of her resources. Despite Carla's unfriendliness, Surjeet continued to offer to lend her materials.

The Anglophone children in this classroom also borrowed and lent materials. In particular, it was evident that several of the Anglophone boys roamed quite freely around the class on borrowing excursions. The Anglophone girls moved less, but their choices about whom to lend to and from whom to solicit loans, like the boys', was reflective of their changing social allegiances. Items that were particularly attractive were often solicited by many children. The Anglophone children who sat at the back of the room often appeared to have the most attractive materials in terms of other children's requests to borrow them.

From the above description, it seems evident that borrowing and lending practices in this classroom were reflective of the social relations of the children therein. Two of the subject children lent and borrowed little; these particular children were also relatively quiet verbal participants in their classroom. One of the subject children borrowed a great deal from other children in what appeared to be attempts to solicit enjoyable affiliations with them. For the final subject child, borrowing and lending did not appear always to lead to enjoyable interactions with other children.

In this classroom borrowing and lending, material resources were practices that intersected with the social relations of the community participants. These issues are also evident with regard to how some of the intellectual resources of the classroom were managed.

## Using Your Own Words and Ideas

In this Grade 1 classroom, as in many other classrooms, the teacher frequently enjoined the children to “do their own work,” and the children quickly learned the “rule” and enforced it themselves.

7. [Amy (L1 Chinese) is drawing a picture on a piece of paper on Adam’s (L1 Polish) desk.]

Ms. Jones: Oh no, Amy, you’re supposed to do that on your own. Everybody needs to do this sheet on their own. I need to know what everybody can do on their own. (FN 10.96. 13)

8. Luke: Ms. Jones, can I help Rita?

Ms. Jones: No.

[Luke goes to Rita’s desk.]

John [classmate sitting next to Rita, to Luke]: Ms. Jones said no.

[Luke sits on a bench near Rita.]

John: Luke, I’m keeping my eye on you. (FN 2. 8.96. 29)

9. [Linda comes up to teacher, who is talking to an aide.]

Linda: Ms. Jones, Surjeet was helping Tiffany.

Ms. Jones: Thank you Linda. Surjeet, do your own work. (FN 6.17.96.4)

10. Natalie: Ms. Jones, Terry and Amy are looking at our work!

Ms. Jones: Maybe you could move. (FN 3.6.96.70)

Another example of the management of intellectual resources in the classroom was the customary response of the teacher and the children to oral “copying.” Frequently in this classroom, the children were asked individually to speculate on answers to mathematical estimations or were



required to ask questions or make comments on one another's sharing-time contributions. Both the teacher (gently) and the children (often forcefully) made it known that repetitions were illegitimate contributions.

11. [Natalie (L1 English) shows the class a book she has produced at home.]

Natalie: Any questions or comments?

Surjeet: You like it?

Natalie: (Nods.)

May [L1 Cantonese]: How did you make that picture?

Natalie: Like this.

Amy: You like that book?

Luke: We've already had that question, Amy. (FN 10.4.95.3)

12. [Children estimating how many pumpkin seeds are in the pumpkin. Ms. Jones writing the numbers on chart next to their names.]

Adam: One zillion.

Ms. Jones: I don't know how to write that.

Adam: One and a lot of zeros.

Ms. Jones: Pick a smaller number.

Adam: One million.

May: One thousand!

Surjeet: One million.

Ms. Jones: Somebody already guessed that. You can choose a number above or below.

[Surjeet turns away.] (FN 10.12.96.31)

At the beginning of the year, there were many instances when the bilingual students orally repeated like this, but there are no such instances in my field notes or in the videotaped data from after Christmas. It appeared that the children had learned effectively not to repeat in this way.

In the kindergarten year, it was apparent to me that some children sometimes used oral and written (drawing) copying as an affiliative practice of flattery. The children would repeat the statements of their friends in language play; they would copy one another's drawings and make explicit statements about the similarity of their pictures as evidence of friendship. However, in Grade 1 the bilingual children who were the specific focus of the study appeared to learn quickly that oral repetitions were not welcome and that copying the written work of others was also seen as illegitimate.

However, there were times in this classroom when a kind of copying or helping in this classroom was not illegitimate. On some occasions, helping was regarded positively. From time to time the teacher organized the children in small groups to complete a task. These small-group interaction tasks suspended the usual classroom practice of doing one's own work, and the children, unsurprisingly, appeared to require some

negotiation time, especially at the beginning of such activities, to decide how to manage their contributions. Another task that required helping was associated with journal writing: Before the children wrote in their journals about their weekend activities, for example, they were encouraged to speak with an assigned classmate about what they were going to write. Most children refused this help.

In summary, it was apparent that for children to help other children with their tasks was commonly a prohibited practice and that for children to “help themselves” (by copying or repeating) was similarly negatively regarded. “Helping” was not always so regarded, however, and some tasks were set up explicitly so that the children might help each other.

## DISCUSSION

I have described three practices in a Grade 1 classroom, practices so commonplace in classrooms as to be almost invisible. I now examine how these practices contributed to the social structures of that site and what effects they may have had on the students who were the specific focus of my research.

Requiring the children to work at desks assigned by the teacher is a very common practice in primary classrooms. In the classroom I have described it is obvious that the effects of this practice were to control which children were in proximity with one another as well as to bring some children under close teacher surveillance and to disrupt verbal interactions for some but not all of the children. Those children defined as needing help because they spoke English as an L2, as well as Anglophone children perceived to be having some difficulty with school, were so placed as to make chatting between them more difficult than it was for other children. Children perceived to be coping well with the requirements of Grade 1 were seated together toward the back of the room, farther from the teacher, and were thus able to engage with one another in lengthy, obviously enjoyable conversations.

Postmodern philosophers have called attention to the purposes and effects of surveillance. Foucault (1979) writes about 18th-century innovations in French education, envisioned by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, directed toward improving the efficiency of schooling.

By assigning individual places it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all. . . . It made the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle dreamt of a classroom in which the spatial distribution might provide a whole series of distinctions at once: according to the pupils' progress, worth, character, application,

cleanliness and parents' fortune. . . . "Pupils attending the highest lessons will be placed in the benches closest to the wall, followed by the others according to the order of the lessons moving toward the middle of the classroom. . . ." Things must be arranged so that "those whose parents are neglectful and verminous must be separated from those who are careful and clean; that an unruly and frivolous pupil should be placed between two who are well-behaved and serious. . . ." (p. 147)

Foucault (1979) observes that classroom spatial arrangements that place individuals in separate locations facilitating supervision, hierarchy, and rewards can be historically traced to about the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Perpetual observation of individuals under this system provided for the establishment of norms and rank.

In the eighteenth century, "rank" begins to define the great form of distribution of individuals in the educational order: rows or ranks of pupils in the class, corridors, courtyards; rank attributed to each pupil at the end of each task and each examination; the rank he obtains from week to week, month to month, year to year. (pp. 146–147)

As Ryan (1989) notes with regard to the same time,

Workers, prisoners, patients, students and citizens were compared, differentiated, and ranked according to where they stood in relation to the "good" and the "bad." . . . Sanctions were universally employed to "normalize" deviants who by their actions departed from accepted standards. (p. 400)

It may be that students who enter school speaking languages other than English are defined as something like *benignly deviant*, in Foucault's terms, in that their language departs from accepted standards, and that as a group these students constitute a rank that requires normalization. McDermott (1993) and Mehan (1993) point out the ways in which the rank of *learning disabled* has a reality in public schools independent of the individuals assigned to the rank. Thinking about ESL status as a similar rank, requiring normalization, could be helpful in disrupting taken-for-granted notions of what learning an L2 in schools might be.

The children whose desks were placed close to the teacher's customary position in the classroom were seen as appropriately interacting only or at least primarily with the teacher and then working on their own on the completion of teacher-assigned tasks. When they were removed from the class for ESL instruction, they came under the very close supervision of another teacher, as members of a much smaller group of children. In this way, relative to the children whom the teacher saw as capable students, the bilingual children I observed had relatively few unobstructed (or unsupervised) opportunities to speak to peers with whom they customarily chose to interact during unsupervised times at school.

Therefore, the opportunities of the bilingual children who were seen as having difficulties to interact with more capable, English-speaking peers were curtailed. The legitimate verbal interaction for the children sitting at the front of the room was with the teacher. In one way, one might see this circumstance as facilitating their L2 learning by encouraging them to interact primarily with the most expert old-timer (in terms of English) in the room. Shuy (1981) points out a particular difficulty with this arrangement, however, in noting the sociolinguistic inappropriateness of students speaking like teachers.

Amy's and Surjeet's voluntary removal of themselves from large-group sessions, combined with their removal from the class for ESL, contributed to the impression of their increasing marginalization. Marginalization is the customary but, in this case, inapt metaphor. In truth, being on the margins, farther from the teacher's surveillance, could be seen in some ways as a more powerful position in that one's autonomy in choosing activities and verbal participation is greater than it is when one is more centrally located with regard to the teacher. Amy's and Surjeet's removal of themselves to their desks might be seen, therefore, as a practice of resistance to the centrally defined classroom activities.

A second practice in this classroom had to do with individual management of material resources. The children had desks in which they stored their individually purchased materials and were reminded frequently of the need to use their own materials, bring their own books, and so on. For a variety of reasons, many children did not always have available the resources they needed for task completion, so they borrowed from other students. Borrowing subverted in some ways the intent of the first classroom practice: keeping the children at their separate desks. Roaming for borrowing was risky because the teacher could and did stop the children from doing so and reprimand them for it, and other children could legitimately complain about it. The lessons reinforced in the performance of this borrowing practice were that some children had more resources than others, that some had "better" resources than others, and that individual children had the power to decide whether or not they would share their resources. Lending was not stigmatized; borrowing was. In addition, of course, the children learned that whereas borrowing was not a teacher-legitimated practice, they could engage in it surreptitiously.

Finally, the practice of requiring that the children not copy one another's written or verbal productions was enforced by both the teacher and the children. Throughout the year, all the children became more physically vigilant about protecting their written productions from others (e.g., by leaning over their notebooks or covering their writing with their hands). The children learning ESL copied (repeated) other children's verbal productions more frequently than did Anglophone

children at the beginning of the year. By the end of the year, I observed very little of this kind of verbal copying on the part of any of the students. Its unequivocally negative valuation might have been responsible for its disappearance from the data. Hull and Rose (1989) note that

A fundamental social and psychological reality about discourse—oral or written—is that human beings continually appropriate each other's language to establish group membership, to grow and to define themselves. . . . [Our own] clearly documented writing may let us forget or even, camouflage how much more it is that we borrow from existing texts, how much we depend on membership in a community for our language, our voices, our very arguments. (pp. 151–152)

Learners of English in this classroom, as they were discouraged from explicit appropriation of others' words, were taught that words, like things, were individually owned and were not community resources.

Lave and Wenger (1991) write that "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (p. 31). What do children learn in these three social practices? It seems to me that these practices of classrooms contribute to instantiating the notion that the individuality of the children must be established, reinforced, and protected. Children sit at their own desks, use their own materials, do their own work, and use their own words. Knowing and staying in your place, having good materials in your own place, keeping track of and taking care of them, and having your own "things" to write and draw and say establish each child as an individual who, on his or her own, negotiates classroom life. The community learns to see some children as more or less adept at these practices, more or less privileged with regard to their acquisitions, and more or less autonomous in deciding their activities and verbal participation.

In the same way that some children may have more or fewer crayons in their desks than others, these practices contribute to children's being seen by the whole community as having more or less English, literacy, mathematics, or whatever. One of the required tasks of a teacher is to ascertain how much any one individual has and report that to parents and authorities. In the classroom in which I observed, I noted the teacher's particularly frequent reminders to the children to work on their own just before she wrote and distributed report cards.

This individualizing of the children starts a process of community stratification that increasingly leads to the exclusion of some students from certain activities, practices, identities, and affiliations. Teachers "break them apart, take them away." L1 subcommunities do not survive; L2 learners become systematically excluded from just those conversations in which they legitimately might peripherally participate with child

experts, English old-timers. They cannot speak like teachers, but teachers are the only experts with whom they are to interact legitimately.

Of course, many other practices of classrooms and their wider context reinforce the notion that individuals come to own knowledge. Certainly, the practices of researchers who have investigated L2 learning, as well as those of most educational psychologists (as discussed by Wertsch, 1991), also contribute to reinforcing this notion. I have identified here three locally observable practices that I believe contribute to the beginning of a process by which children who speak languages other than English at home begin to acquire school identities as persons whose inventory is smaller than the inventories of others. They begin to acquire identities that, in some very problematic and contradictory ways, require normalizing.

## CONCLUSION

Lave and Wenger's (1991) discussion of learning as participation in communities of practice is offered as a way to "extend . . . the study of learning beyond the context of pedagogical structuring, includ[e] the structure of the social world in the analysis, and tak[e] into account in a central way the conflictual nature of social practice" (p. 49). If one takes a community-of-participation perspective on this classroom, it is a community whose practices contribute to constructing children as individuals and their acquisitions as the salient points of analysis, a much different sort of analysis than if one begins by looking at individual children and examines how they negotiate a largely unexamined social milieu.

The children with whom I worked were 6 and 7 years old when I observed them in Grade 1. Any long-term effects of their positioning in their Grade 1 classroom are impossible, of course, to determine. Nevertheless, I find that a quote from a Toronto secondary student, a Japanese learner of ESL, portrays a disturbing and possible future for the children I observed.

You go to [a non-ESL class] and sit with White people. You understand the content of the class, but when you have to find a partner and work on a group project, you can't get into a group. You feel too embarrassed to ask someone to be your partner. You feel like you're gonna be a burden on them. So you don't ask them; you wait until they ask you. (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995, p. 40)

Kanno and Applebaum also cite research by Brislin (1981), Furnham and Bochner (1986), and Klein, Alexander, and Tseng (1971) showing

that “many students from the Far East have difficulty developing a viable social network with North Americans” (p. 41). How does this happen? My research suggests that the everyday, almost invisible practices of classrooms beginning very early might contribute to these long-term effects.

To reverse these effects will not be a simple matter of putting the children back together again. As Kanno and Applebaum (1995) remark, “Perhaps it is high time we discarded our romantic notion that if we put children of all ethnic/linguistic backgrounds in one place we will witness the development of true cross-cultural understanding” (p. 43). Mary’s comments about birthday parties serve as a reminder that patterns of exclusion and domination persist. Paley (1992) describes her attempts to build resistance to “the habit of rejection” by instituting the classroom rule for children “You can’t say you can’t play” (p. 3). She observes in her classroom work that some children are positioned as outsiders and notes that

The [traditional] approach has been to help the outsiders develop the characteristics that will make them more acceptable to the insiders. I am suggesting something different: The group must change its attitudes and expectations toward those who, for whatever reasons, are not yet part of the system. (p. 33)

Certainly the approach to the education of children who go to North American schools speaking languages other than the majority language has been to attempt to help them “develop the characteristics [i.e., the language] which will make them more acceptable to insiders.” Paley asks how those groups can be made more inclusive; that is, how can the group change to allow those outsiders in? Freire (1970) sees the problem of outsider/insider somewhat differently.

The truth is that the oppressed are not “marginals,” are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside”—inside the structure that made them “beings for others.” The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves.” (p. 55)

This perspective, which sees educational structures (communities/practices) as particularly oppressive to some, is perhaps more critical than we as L2 educators are accustomed to seeing in L2 educational literature. Coming to understand how our research practices as well as our classroom practices collaborate in constructing ESL students as individuals who, on their own, acquire or do not acquire the capital of the classroom (the language) may go some way toward helping us find alternative practices that will permit those students to become and be seen as beings for themselves.

Packer (1993) cites Cazden's (1993) argument that coming "to 'participate' in a linguistic community is not a process without conflict: It involves the meeting and clash of divergent interests and the points of view to which these interests give rise" (as cited on p. 259). Although much SLA research is concerned with assessing how individual L2 learners move progressively (and more or less quickly) toward a more extensive acquisition of the L2 and, presumably, fuller participation in the activities of the L2 community, here the practices of a particular community appear in effect to prevent the increasing empowerment and active participation of some of those defined as L2 learners. Clearly, if educators are to understand how to transform the social structures in the milieus for which they have responsibility—classrooms—so as to prepare students effectively for the conflicts to which Cazden refers, investigation of the social practices in those situations must be ongoing, critical, and broad. Looking at furniture, crayons, and copying will be only the beginning.

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