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Negotiating Knowledge, Emotion, and Cultural Solidarity: Epistemics and Empathy in a Literacy Class for Mixtec Migrants

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Negotiating Knowledge, Emotion, and Cultural Solidarity:

Epistemics and Empathy in a Literacy Class for Mixtec Migrants

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Applied Linguistics

by

Adrienne Lynett

2017

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Negotiating Knowledge, Emotion, and Cultural Solidarity:

Epistemics and Empathy in a Literacy Class for Mixtec Migrants

by

Adrienne Lynett

Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor John H. Schumann, Chair

People frequently display understanding of one another's goals and actions in conversation. Aside from building a common ground necessary for conversation to take place, this intersubjective understanding can be a means for creating and maintaining social affiliation. For indigenous Mexican immigrants in the U.S., this interactional means of connecting with other members of their community is especially crucial given their marginalized status.

This dissertation uses a conversation analysis approach to investigate the interactive construction of social affiliation in a community of indigenous Mexican immigrants in a Spanish-language literacy class in California. These immigrants are native speakers of the indigenous Mesoamerican language Mixtec, and are therefore learning to read and write for the first time in a second language. To uncover the role of social affiliation in this literacy classroom, I focus on the interactional features that contribute to and reveal shared sociocultural

understanding — namely, the deployment of epistemic and empathic resources for cultural affiliation.

Chapter 1 orients the reader to the study, provides rationale for and aims of the project, and states the project's research questions. Chapter 2 surveys some of the relevant scholarship on language and social affiliation, drawing from the theoretical orientations of language socialization, sociocultural models of literacy acquisition, and conversation analysis (specifically as regards epistemics and empathic communication). Chapter 3 provides background information about the Mixtec community, including a very brief overview of the history Mixtec people in the U.S., the Mixtec language, and indigenous cultural orientations. Chapter 4 describes the methods used to collect and analyze the data (primarily ethnographic and conversation analytic), and recruitment procedures for the study participants. Chapter 5 begins the analysis portion of the dissertation, investigating repair sequences as resources for managing epistemic imbalances and building social affiliation. Chapter 6 turns our attention to empathy in this setting, focusing on assessments as resources for displaying and soliciting empathy. Chapter 7 treats both epistemics and empathy by way of analyzing instances of metalinguistic discourse in the classroom. (Each analysis chapter concludes with a section on implications of the findings for learning). Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the study and proposes some future directions in the same strain of research.

To conduct this research, I engaged in long-term ethnographic study of the community and captured video-recordings of interactions whenever possible, which were transcribed and analyzed using conversation analysis methods. The study illustrates how epistemic and empathic resources serve not only to advance the progressivity of conversation but also to reveal and build sociocultural solidarity among a displaced community.

As a study that investigates these particular communicative achievements within a specific community of practice, this dissertation addresses the "problem of intersubjectivity" — i.e., how people understand one another without direct access to others' minds — as well as the understudied phenomena of adult literacy acquisition and indigenous immigrants' experiences. Such an investigation, which uses epistemics and empathy as a point of departure from which to study the experiences of adult language-minority individuals in the literacy classroom, can illuminate both the particular experience of indigenous immigrants acquiring literacy, and the very universal endeavor to find common ground through social interaction. Moreover, this study illustrates the potential of ethnomethodological research for understanding how social structures and ideologies are constructed, quietly and continuously, through everyday social interaction.

The dissertation of Adrienne Lynett is approved.

Marjorie Harness Goodwin

John Heritage

John H. Schumann, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

Dedicated to Mom and Dad, who first taught me the value of knowledge and empathy

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

VITA

Education

2009   M.A., Linguistics
            Georgetown University

2005   B.A., English; minor, Political Science
            University of California, Los Angeles

Fellowships and Honors

2016-2017   Dissertation Year Fellowship
            Graduate Division, UCLA

2015   Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship
            U.S. Department of Education

2015   Culture, Brain, Development, and Mental Health Fieldwork Grant
            Foundation for Psychocultural Research

2013   Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship
            Graduate Division, UCLA

2011-2015   Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of Distinction
            Humanities Division, UCLA

2009-2010   International Studies Fellowship
            International Institute, UCLA

Academic Work Experience

2016   Teaching fellow, UCLA Department of Applied Linguistics

2013-2016   Graduate writing consultant, UCLA Graduate Writing Center

2015   Teaching assistant, UCLA Department of Linguistics

2015   Special reader, UCLA Department of Spanish & Portuguese

2014   Visiting researcher, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, the
            Netherlands

2013   Research assistant, USC Department of Psychology, Puebla, Mexico

2013   Section editor, Issues in Applied Linguistics

2012-2015 Teaching assistant, UCLA Department of Applied Linguistics

2012-2014 Teaching assistant, UCLA Department of Writing Programs

Selected Presentations

Lynett, A. (May 2017). Repair as a resource for group affiliation: Intersubjectivity in an adult literacy classroom. Paper presented at the Intersubjectivity in Action conference in Helsinki, Finland.

Lynett, A. (August 2016). Epistemic resources for social affiliation: The case of indigenous migrants in the U.S. Paper presented at the 2016 American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA.

Lynett, A. (November 2015). Epistemic resources for affiliation among Mixtec speakers: Evidence from talk-in-interaction. Poster presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

Lynett, A. (March 2015). "I was worthless": Worth, empowerment and personhood in adult literacy narratives. Paper presented at the Georgetown University Roundtable, Washington, D.C.

Lynett, A. (June 2014). "You know you don't behave well": A conversation analysis approach to theory of mind in persons with schizophrenia. Paper presented at the International Conference on Language and Social Psychology, Honolulu, HI.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Human sociality depends on people's ability to relate to and understand one another. Language and other communicative resources are frequently deployed in interaction in order to acquire, maintain, understand and apply this information about one another. This dissertation investigates the deployment of communicative resources for social affiliation in an adult literacy classroom for native Mixtec-speaking immigrants in California. To this end, the dissertation investigates interactional resources that contribute to and reveal social affiliation and intersubjectivity by providing opportunities for epistemic and empathic negotiation.

In the face of poverty, acculturative stress, and sometimes literally backbreaking labor conditions, members of the indigenous migrant community deploy certain communicative resources to create and maintain a sense of group solidarity in this new and difficult environment. The specific communicative resources under investigation will be strategies for displaying an understanding of both what one's interlocutor *knows*, and how one's interlocutor *feels*. These aspects of social interaction have been called epistemics and empathy, respectively. As a study that investigates these particular communicative achievements within a specific community of practice, this dissertation addresses both the "problem of intersubjectivity" (Grinnell, 1983) and the understudied phenomenon of adult literacy acquisition. Such an investigation, which uses epistemics and empathy as a point of departure from which to study the experiences of adult language-minority individuals in the literacy classroom, can illuminate both the particular experience of indigenous immigrants acquiring literacy, and the very universal endeavor to find common ground through social interaction.

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1.1 Epistemics and empathy

"Territories of knowledge" (Heritage, 2011) have long interested scholars of human behavior, but only in recent years has epistemics been approached as a phenomenon that emerges in real-time interaction. A look at spontaneous talk-in-interaction can reveal how claims and access to various kinds of knowledge (cultural knowledge included) are negotiated among participants. Knowing what an interlocutor knows — and thus producing utterances that are treated as relevant — is at the heart of the study of epistemics in conversation. This basic idea of knowledge of another's knowledge can be extended to more specific settings. Institutional talk is frequently steeped in a specific understanding of the territories of knowledge to which certain participants have rights. These kinds of knowledge imbalances can be unpacked by analyzing sequences of talk as they unfold. Analyzing the interactions in the adult literacy classroom, which has features of both informal and institutional talk, can reveal the strategies by which members of this community navigate its complicated epistemic ecology (Goodwin, 2013; 2010).

In a classic case of the interactive construction of a sentence, Charles Goodwin observed the verbal and non-verbal ways that interlocutors make their talk relevant, or newsworthy, to recipients, depending on their differential knowledge states (Goodwin, 1979). Through a detailed analysis of the negotiation of epistemic status, Goodwin showed how the utterance under investigation ("I gave up smoking cigarettes one week ago today actually") is modified and expanded in real time based on the available evidence of the listeners' knowledge of the event in question. Such communicative strategies are employed in order to conform to the interactional rule observed by Sacks that "one should not tell one's participants what one takes it they already know" (Sacks, 1973, p. 139). This notion of knowing what an interlocutor knows — and thus

producing utterances that will be treated as relevant — is at the heart of the study of epistemics in conversation.

This most basic idea of knowledge of another's knowledge can be extended to more specific settings. Institutional talk is frequently steeped in a specific understanding of the territories of knowledge to which certain participants have rights. For example, in medical communication, the doctor is perceived to have more claims to medical knowledge than the patient, and the ensuing interaction reflects this epistemic imbalance. A similar imbalance can be observed surrounding kinds of knowledge that may not be institutional in nature but is nonetheless a powerful force in interaction. One such type of knowledge is cultural knowledge. A given member of a cultural or social group may be expected to have more authority on that group's customs and practices than anyone outside that group. Of course, these territories of knowledge are much more fluid and complex than this simple explanation might suggest. To provide an example from the Mixtec community, a Mixtec speaker may have a good deal of knowledge about the language and its sounds and registers, but not necessarily about the written language. These kinds of knowledge imbalances can be unpacked by analyzing sequences of talk as they unfold. Mixtec speakers in California must navigate a complicated epistemic environment that is the product of their unique cultural background. Although Mixtec speakers may be compelled to assert their knowledge and authority about matters pertaining to the Mixtec culture and language, in other settings they tend to cede authority. An analysis of the interactions of this community in these various settings reveals the strategies by which members of this community navigate this complicated epistemic ecology (Goodwin, 2013; 2010).

Expression of empathy is another resource that may be employed — often in conjunction with claims to knowledge — to reveal one's identification with a group. Empathy has been

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defined as "an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition and is similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel in the given situation" (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Morris, 2006; p. 184). In an example provided by Terasaki (2004), the recipient's affiliative response ("oh that's wonderful") to the speaker's prior announcement ("I gotta B plus on my math test"), demonstrates one of the many ways empathy can be expressed in conversation. In describing "empathic moments," Heritage noted, interlocutors balance respect for an individual's rights to her own personal experience with the mandate for "human affiliation within a community of persons and a common social, moral, and cultural heritage" (Heritage, 2011; p. 183). Through detailed analysis of spontaneous interactions, this human affiliation can be observed. These "empathic moments" contribute to participants' group identification by revealing affiliative stances toward their shared experiences (Heritage, 2011). As was asserted by Enfield, "at a cultural level, common ground may be indexed by signs of ethnic identity, and the common cultural background such signs may entail" (Enfield, 2008; p. 224).

1.2 Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation investigates the role of repair, assessment, and metalanguage in building, maintaining, and displaying social affiliation through epistemic and empathic stance-taking. The analysis draws on long-term ethnographic study of the Mixtec community in California, and audio- and video-recordings of classroom interactions, which were transcribed and analyzed using conversation analysis methods.

The research questions guiding this project were as follows:

- What are the epistemic and empathic resources used by these students in the literacy classroom setting, and how does the deployment of these resources construct social affiliation and cultural solidarity?

- What are the implications of this interactive construction of group affiliation literacy acquisition specifically and, more broadly, for learning?

This dissertation comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1 orients the reader to the study, provides the rationale for and aims of the project, states the project's research questions, and summarizes and contextualizes each subsequent chapter.

Chapter 2 situates this project in the extant scholarship on language and social affiliation by surveying some of the literature on language socialization, sociocultural models of literacy acquisition, and conversation analysis (specifically as regards epistemics and empathic communication). This literature review also identifies and recounts some of the contributions of other disciplines to the study of shared understanding.

Chapter 3 provides background information about the Mixtec community, including a brief overview of the history Mixtec people in the U.S., the Mixtec language, and indigenous cultural orientations, in recognition that an analysis of affiliation among a particular group must take into account the shared history and circumstances of members of that group. This background chapter aims to place the current research within the context of centuries of discriminatory policies and practices that are inseparable from the present-day experiences of Mixtec people.

Chapter 4 describes the study settings, the methods used to collect and analyze the data (primarily ethnographic and conversation analytic), and recruitment procedures for the study participants.

Chapter 5 begins the analysis portion of the dissertation, investigating repair and reformulation sequences as resources for managing epistemic imbalances and building social affiliation. This chapter discusses instances of repair in the literacy classroom, beginning with more typical correction sequences, where there is little opportunity for cultural affiliation, and progressing to repair sequences in which the student initiates, and group affiliation is more explicitly observable. All the sequences described in Chapter 5, however, involve negotiation of the epistemic ecology of the classroom, on the part of both teacher and student.

Chapter 6 turns our attention to empathy in this setting, focusing on the assessment sequence as a resource for displaying and soliciting empathy. Assessment is another standard pedagogical device, used commonly by teachers to evaluate student performance. Assessments are also frequent in ordinary, non-institutional conversations, in which they can and often do build empathic affiliation. Both kinds of assessments go on in this setting, with one type often giving way to the other. Chapter 6 demonstrates this dynamic aspect of assessment sequences and describes how they can reveal group affiliation in certain cases.

Chapter 7 examines both epistemics and empathy by way of analyzing instances of metalinguistic discourse in the classroom. Metalanguage can refer to talk about talking but also may entail talk about written language. Though the latter type of metalanguage occurs constantly in the literacy classroom, because this class is also teaching the students pronunciation and other non-written language skills, talk about talk occurs frequently as well. Of particular relevance to social affiliation, talk about language use (i.e., metapragmatic communication) can also be

observed. Chapter 7 examines these varying dimensions and levels of metalinguistic discourse, with a consideration of how each of these instances of metalanguage contributes to shared knowledge and empathic affiliation.

Each analysis chapter concludes with a section on possible implications of the findings for learning, particularly in settings such as this one where shared cultural background and social marginalization are salient features of these students' experience.

Chapter 8 concludes the study with some reflections on the limitations of the research and the methodological challenges of combining macro-level considerations of cultural identification with micro-level ethnomethodological analysis. Finally, future directions in the same strain of research are proposed.

CHAPTER 2

A review of the literature on language and social affiliation

Because this project investigates group affiliation as it emerges in talk-in-interaction, it is

useful to situate this work in previous scholarship about the role of communication in human

sociality. In the following section, I briefly review some of this research, which arises from a

variety of disciplinary traditions, beginning with evolutionary evidence for the dual emergence

of social cognition and language, moving to the role of social affiliation in language learning and

language use, then considering the role of social interaction in literacy acquisition.

2.1 The co-evolution of language and social cognition

It is difficult to imagine social cognition processes that don't involve language in some

way (Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008). We use language to impart information to others, of course,

but also to make jokes, to guess someone's next conversational move, to deceive and to

stereotype, among many other mundane human activities. Language — and paralinguistic

resources — may be seen as a tool with which these complex socio-cognitive activities can be

facilitated and mediated.

Language and human sociality most likely evolved together, with human ancestors

developing more and more complex social interaction, and language developing alongside this

socio-cultural development. There exists a good deal of evidence for various aspects of social

cognition in other animals, as well as some of the precursors for language development. For

example, joint attention, or gaze following, an important feature of human social life and

learning, can be observed in not only primates (Tomasello, Call, & Hare, 1998) but also in dogs

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(Miklösi, Polgárdi, Topál, & Csányi, 1998) and birds (Bugnyar, Stöwe, & Heinrich, 2004).

Chimpanzees have been shown to be able to differentiate between individuals who can see food

behind a barrier and those who can't (Braüer, Call, & Tomasello, 2007) and those who have and

haven't seen food hidden (Kaminski, Call, & Tomasello, 2008), Theory-of-Mind-related

capacities that have been argued to be requisite for language in humans (Fitch, Huber, &

Bugnyar, 2010). Further, primate vocalizations, though not language-like in many ways, do

nonetheless serve as a means of social communication. Seyfarth and Cheney (2014) have taken

this evidence to suggest that early in evolution, the ancestors of modern primates faced social

problems that encouraged the selection of systems of perception, communication, and cognition

that provided the infrastructure for human language to eventually emerge. Whatever the

direction, observation of these behaviors in animals can be informative in our aim to

understanding human language and its relationship to sociality.

2.2 Social interaction and language acquisition

The relevance of social interaction to language acquisition, and especially second

language acquisition (SLA), is probably underestimated. Much of language acquisition research

has neglected its interactional nature, aside from important work to be discussed in the following

pages.

Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky argued as early as the early 1920s for the importance

of the social world to human development and therefore language learning (Vygotsky, 1978);

however, theories of individual, constructivist cognitive development derived from a Piagetian

framework have traditionally held more sway. Still, Vygotsky's influence has grown in the

United States, especially since the publication of a selection of his writings in *Mind in Society* (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

More recent scholars in the interactional camp of language acquisition including Lee, Schumann, Kirby, Tomasello, and Levinson have argued for the importance of interaction in language development, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically. Lee and colleagues approached the normal acquisition of child language as a result of the human motivation to relate to conspecifics, instead of as a result of a biologically endowed grammatical module or device, as is claimed by Chomskyan theory (Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, & Schumann, 2009; Lee & Schumann, 2005). This approach acknowledges the role of socialization and humans' innate drive to connect and communicate with others. Their theory, which relied a great deal on findings in developmental psychology and neurobiology, acknowledges the role of evolutionary biology and neurochemistry in fostering those connections.

This "interactional instinct" can be seen in human ontogeny and well as phylogeny: Just as interaction furthers the development of language in an individual child, so has this drive to interact shaped the course of human evolution. (Even further, interaction operates at the level of the *language itself*, forcing it to adapt, as is put forth by the complex adaptive system model of language evolution.) Lee and colleagues argued that linguistic structure as we know it emerged through conversational interaction as hominids found ways to "express meanings with consistent form over time" (p. 4). Because these linguistic systems emerge through conversational interaction, they must fit the cognitive capacities of the individuals who are using them (Kirby, 1998). However, as Lee and colleagues went on to argue, linguistic systems not only conformed to the limits of human cognition; there must also have been evolutionary pressure to select for skills that would further these systems. Those skills, as put forth by Tomasello and others

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(Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003; Carpenter, Nagell, Tomasello, Butterworth, & Moore, 1998), include imitation, joint attention, an understanding of others' intentions, and cultural learning. Culture, if viewed as a system of "complex, collaborative activities … structured by shared symbolic artifacts" (Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, & Moll, 2005; p. 675), certainly requires some kind of shared understanding. Other views of culture bring us to the same conclusion about the importance of shared understanding, as in Elinor Ochs' view of culture as "a loose set of guidelines and premises, *shared* to varying extents by members of a society [emphasis added]" (Ochs, 1987, p. 307) Any reflection on the nature of culture, then, should make clear the link between social interaction and culture. A brief look at the prevailing theories of language evolution and cultural evolution illuminates a trajectory from conversational interaction, to selection for skills associated with social cognition, to language, with feedback occurring at every stage of this process.

2.2.1 Language socialization

The shared "guidelines and premises" that constitute culture must be learned. Put another way, we are socialized into the norms, values, and behaviors of a particular culture or society. The language socialization model of language learning, pioneered by Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin, investigates the social and cultural processes that underlie development, and thus necessarily shifts the focus from the individual mind to interactional practices. With regard to knowledge and empathy, Ochs argued that affective and epistemic dispositions contribute to other contextual features, which may include social or cultural identity, among others (1990). These dispositions are evident in interaction as stances, which include "displays of epistemic attitudes […] and displays of affective attitudes" (Ochs, 1993; p. 288). When such stances,

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whether epistemic or affective, relate to or rely on cultural knowledge, they contribute to cultural identity-making and social solidarity. In a community of individuals largely excluded from full participation in society, the role of social identity is especially crucial. One's social identity serves not only to indicate to others a particular category membership, but also to affiliate with others in the same group. Identity practices in interaction are therefore crucial to the creation and maintenance of a social group.

An investigation into the interactive construction of social identity and group solidarity can reveal how people are socialized into the community in everyday, casual conversation as well as institutional settings. Since language is a crucial conduit for socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012), interaction is an ideal locus from which to observe the construction of group identification and affiliation. The present study, then, aims to ground its investigation in "the *interactional production* of acts and stances" (He, 2004; p. 201) [italics in original]. Indeed, work on the construction of language competence through management of misunderstandings revealed the ways that social and cultural identification can manifest through interaction — specifically, through instances of conversational repair (Bolden, 2012). The current study follows in these footsteps by documenting phenomena including but not limited to repair, to investigate cultural identity.

Whether from the acquisition or socialization orientation, most scholarship on language learning studies pre-literate children acquiring their mother tongue or older, literate learners acquiring a second language. Indeed, owing to the prevalence of formal education in the societies where most of this kind of research is conducted, it is unusual to find second-language learners who are not literate in their native language. Bigelow and Tarone observed that the predominance of SLA study participants belies the fact that many adult second-language learners

lack such a high level of education, and may in fact be minimally literate (if at all) in their native language (2004). They rightly called for more work on the acquisition of non-native languages in adulthood among people with a wider range of educational experiences and literacy levels. After all, multilingualism among non-literate people has been the norm for most of human history, and continues to be the norm in many parts of the world. Because modern-day language pedagogy is so heavily text-based, though, a lack of experience with text can pose a serious obstacle for low-literate learners. Though this project investigates social interaction and not literacy acquisition per se, the salience of literacy in the study setting warrants an overview of literacy acquisition and practices, and a consideration of the ways that literacy is, in fact, a socially constructed, interactive project.

2.2.2 Literacy acquisition: Autonomous and social approaches

Mixtec immigrants' experience learning Spanish and, for some, English as a second language in adulthood is complicated by its limited experience with text. In most cases, or at least most cases with which Western scholars are familiar, people learn their native language in childhood with relative ease, and subsequent language in adulthood with greater effort, and are unlikely to reach native speaker levels of fluency. Mixtec immigrants in California, however, are learning a non-native language in adulthood without the benefit (or hindrance) of literacy in any script.

Even outside the literacy classroom, much of social interaction involves literacy in some way. (For example, any interaction that makes use of written material, or that refers to written material, requires literacy skills.) In the following pages, I discuss cognitive and sociocultural

approaches to studying literacy, and the relationship between literacy acquisition and human sociality.

Understanding what it might be like to experience the world without literacy has two important implications. First, an investigation into cognitive processes without literacy can give us crucial information about language and cognition more generally. Indeed, a brain without literacy is in fact the more "natural" brain — an argument to be discussed in greater detail in later pages. It follows, then, that the study of illiterate populations constitutes a sort of natural experiment wherein we can identify some of the effects of literacy. An understanding of life without recourse to text can shed light on the way these individuals relate to and make sense of the world around them — in particular, how they cope with the challenge of navigating a world that is so oriented to text that those without recourse to it are inherently enormously disadvantaged.

Acknowledgment of these disadvantages experienced by illiterate people living in literate societies has led scores of well-intentioned researchers, educators, and practitioners the world to view literacy education as an ideal opportunity to improve human development and overall well-being. For one, progress in literacy can be measured using established measurement tools. But perhaps more importantly, early literacy development has been viewed as a key predictor of success later in one's educational career. Conversely, the reported consequences of illiteracy within the formal education setting are severe. Children who fail to master reading at their grade level cannot learn from textbooks or respond properly to standardized tests, and they often fall behind in school and are rarely able to catch up. Adults without basic reading and writing skills face an even steeper slope, with evidence that attention and working memory — both crucial in the acquisition of reading skills — begin to decline after about age 20 (Abadzi, 2006). At the

global level, literacy is identified as an important avenue for human development. It is a key component of Education for All, an initiative launched in 1990 by an international coalition of governments, development organizations and others committed to ensuring that all young people and most adults — regardless of gender or national origin — achieve literacy and numeracy skills.

But the notion of literacy is much more complicated than the assumptions above might imply. The very definition of the words *literacy* and *illiteracy* are a matter of serious debate. Further, the rationales for literacy education, modes of implementation, and outcomes vary widely. These complications suggest that study of literacy would benefit from an investigation into the sociocultural context in which literacy is acquired, assessed, and discussed. Literacy is a cognitive process, certainly, but it is also a social and cultural one. A growing body of research insists that the process of becoming literate is one that cannot be separated from an individual's community, life experiences, and social systems (Ochs, 1988; Street, 1999).

It must be acknowledged that the very act of reading is an unnatural one that requires years of practice, instruction, and exposure to texts. Studies from the field of cognitive psychology have shown that skilled readers engage in extremely quick information processing to decode the symbols on a page into meanings, while at the same time drawing on rules, patterns and systems stored in long-term memory, including grammar, semantic information, and topic knowledge (Bruer, 1993). This complicated process is costly and time-consuming to learn — and we know it must be learned, unlike language, which is much more effortlessly acquired in childhood. There can be no innate biological capacity specifically for reading and writing because evolution would simply not have had time to select for this capacity in the amount of time our species has been reading and writing. Unlike spoken language, for which it has been

argued that humans have an "instinct" (Pinker, 1994), writing developed too recently for there to be such an "instinct" (Changizi, 2013, p. 3). (Pinker's "instinctual" argument for first language acquisition is itself a matter of fierce debate, though this discussion is outside the scope of the current study.)

Lee and colleagues (2009) also advocated for the primacy of oral language in linguistic analysis, arguing that conversational structure and not the structure characteristic of written language is that which should be accounted for in any neurobiological explanation of language. To account for the impossibility of an evolutionary explanation specifically for reading skill, recent work in neurobiology has suggested that brain circuits originally adapted for other processes (including object recognition) have been co-opted for use in recognizing and making sense of letters and characters (Dehaene, 2009).

Reading truly is a remarkable — and not at all natural — feat. Those of us who learned to read as children may not recall this struggle. A skilled reader, in fact, can't help but understand written sentences in our own language, "just as we can't help but understand any sentence of our language we say out loud" (Bruer, 1993, p. 174). This inability to relate to the experience of a struggling reader, Bruer argued, is a major reason interventions are often unsuccessful in helping these students. Most of these interventions occur earlier in life, however. If it is difficult for us to identify with the struggles of a child learner, it must be nearly impossible for experienced readers to imagine what it would be like to be an adult with the same problem. Because most adults in modern societies can read with little effort, we may assume not only that adults *must* be literate, but also that those who are not must be lacking in motivation, basic intelligence, or some other factor. Harmful judgments can arise from this assumption that literacy is the default state of a competent adult — judgments that are internalized by those who experience it.

Given literacy's relatively recent development, how did it then become so ubiquitous? And how did we forget just how difficult it is to learn to read and write? Saenger (1999) described three important changes in the late Middle Ages that facilitated the mass expansion of literacy in the Western world: the growth of a written Latin vernacular in the 14th and 15th centuries; mass-scale book production beginning in the 17th century; and the growth of educational institutions. Over the last five centuries, through the use of text in the courts, the economy, and religion, literacy has become "a nearly universal entitlement" (Resnick & Gordon, 1999; p. 20). This perceived universality of literacy, though a relatively new development in human society, has shaped our ideologies about literacy and education.

The very etymology of the words *literacy* and *illiteracy* belies the true nature of these states, which most certainly constitute more of a continuum than a dichotomy. Indeed, the definition of the word itself is disputed, so much so that a simple search for "literacy rates" in a particular country will yield very different results depending on the source. The rationales for literacy education, modes of implementation, and outcomes also vary widely. Though literacy has generally been viewed in a positive light, some more critical investigations have shown that, like countless other human enterprises, it has been used to exploit and marginalize as often as to empower and include. Literacy can be a tool for empowerment as well as for perpetuation of hegemonic structures (Freire & Macedo, 1987); in other words, it "mirrors what is best (and worst) in human society" (Wagner, 1999; p. 1).

Such critiques have led to the "social" model of literacy, an approach that insists literacy is first and foremost a *social* phenomenon and therefore cannot be separated from the context in which is occurs. The "autonomous" model, by contrast, views literacy as a cognitive process that takes place in an individual and is independent of context (Street, 1999). This contrast was also

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highlighted by Pennycook (2001), who noted that the autonomous model has traditionally been espoused by applied linguistics and TESOL researchers, to the detriment of the field. Pennycook went on to call into the question the view that literacy is "in and of itself beneficial" and that it can be used to separate people into primitive or sophisticated societies. Scribner and Cole's 1981 study of the Vai people in Liberia, who developed their own writing system independent of any educational system, found that while formal schooling had effects on a number of cognitive skills, literacy in itself did not. Their findings thus warned of the danger of ascribing cognitive development to literacy as opposed to schooling more generally.

This understanding of literacy as a social, context-dependent phenomenon has important implications for practice. As Street reasoned, "if literacy is a social practice, then it varies with social context and is not the same, uniform thing in each case" (1999). Researchers working in this tradition of socially embedded literacy practices have illuminated this very principle by investigating communities with a diverse range of languages and cultural backgrounds. In Shirley Brice Heath's seminal work *Ways With Words*, she identified differences between at-home discourses among three families from three different cultural backgrounds and describes how these communicative styles affect practice and performance in the classroom. This important study brought to light the effect that cultural and societal influences can have on an individual's development — that students with different backgrounds had different interpretations of texts and different approaches and attitudes toward literacy events.

As a socially situated practice that has traditionally been examined as an individual cognitive skill, literacy is an ideal example of Hutchins' (1993) "cognition in the real world," or socially distributed cognition. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) alluded to the natural connection between sociocultural research and socially distributed cognition, arguing that scholars

approaching learning from the sociocultural angle "conceptualize learning as distributed, interactive, contextual, and the result of the learner's participation in a community of practice." In the case of literacy specifically, Gee argued that despite socioculturally inclined literacy researchers' initial opposition to appealing to "the mind," there is actually a natural affinity between situated cognition theory and critical literacy work (2010). He wrote that through an examination of learners' participation in social and cultural practices and the tools that mediate these practices, we can come to an understanding about "what determines what experiences a person has and how they pay attention to those experiences." This kind of understanding is directly connected to a tenet of situated cognition theory, which is that "we think through paying attention to elements of our experiences" (p. 8).

The emphasis on experience, context, community, and attention in situated or socially distributed cognition harks back to intersubjectivity, the philosophical tradition that has paved the way not only for situated models of cognition but also phenomenology, conversation analysis, and other interactionally-oriented approaches to human action.

Taking an interactional approach to literacy acquisition poses a particular challenge: How can we observe intersubjective achievement of a process so widely understood as an individual, "inner" process? As noted, situated cognition theorists have located knowledge in various minds, or distributed among participants. Such an approach, however, focuses on the knowledge and not the practice or the interaction itself. With all due appreciation for situated cognition theory, I instead take intersubjectivity (and the related orientations of phenomenology and ethnomethodology) as the theoretical lens of this project, investigating not knowledge acquisition per se, but rather the interactive achievement of social affiliation as it relates to literacy and language learning practices.

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Although reading and writing are often characterized as individual activities — and the research on literacy acquisition certainly reflects this characterization — literacy is a highly interactive activity. Reading and writing are, after all, communicative acts, even when they are done in physical solitude. Reading and writing is mediated by artifacts and tools in various ways, necessitating interaction not only with other humans but also with elements of the physical environment. It cannot occur without the physical representations to be read and written, or without the tools needed to create these representations. Reading, therefore, is never an accomplishment done by a single individual. Rather, an individual may be decoding a letter with the help of her classmate, who in turn received help from her instructor or family member; a letter whose meaning was ascribed by a sociocultural network influenced by historical developments, political circumstances, and ideologies.

The practice of literacy itself is laden with ideologies. Cook-Gumperz, in an examination of the history of literacy and the judgment placed on it, argued that literacy must be understood not only as the practice of understanding the world around us (prototypically, through written texts), but also as "a set of statements about the value or necessity of these activities" (Cook-Gumperz, 2006; p. 3). In keeping with theories of socially distributed knowledge, these values do not exist within one student or teacher necessarily, but circulate throughout the society within which that student or teacher engages in literacy practice. Though many would agree that literacy is viewed more positively than illiteracy in modern society, it is perhaps less obvious that literacy is in fact perceived to be the baseline or default state for adults. Despite being a relatively recent development in human history as well as an extraordinarily difficult skill to master, most adults who learned to read as children can barely comprehend what it must be like to be unable to read and write. Still, there are plenty of people the world over who lack these skills, and who suffer

major consequences because of it — not just in the practical sense, but also in the way they are perceived and judged by others.

Psychologically oriented research, for its part, provides insight into the ways that literacy acquisition can affect other kinds of cognition. In the decades since Scribner and Cole's groundbreaking work on literacy and cognition, research has uncovered evidence that literacy has an effect on skill in encoding *oral* language, as reviewed by Tarone and Bigelow (2005), and recent experimental work has even found a significant effect of literacy on visual processing (Olivers, Huettig, Singh, & Mishra, 2014), auditory perception (Huettig, Singh, and Mishra, 2011), and prediction (Mishra, Singh, Pandey, & Huettig, 2012). As for literacy's relationship to *social* cognition in particular, recent experimental work with literate subjects has found that reading narratives promotes empathy (Johnson, 2012; Mar & Oatley, 2008) and knowledge of mental-state verbs (Siddiqui, West, & Stanovich, 1998), a finding that further supports the notion that reading promotes social cognition. Research on individuals who have learned sign language later in life has shown an effect of *language* acquisition on false-belief understanding (Pyers & Senghas, 2009).

Such experimental findings, while intriguing, focus on individual cognition rather than the interactive processes that facilitate literacy acquisition, or the influence of literacy acquisition on social interaction. Little work has investigated the role of social interaction or socially distributed cognition in the literacy classroom, least of all among adult learners. Arguably, social cognition is all the more significant among marginalized social groups, who may need to rely even more on the affiliative qualities of epistemic and empathic moments in conversation. This study aims to contribute to research on language and literacy acquisition that takes interaction as its unit of analysis.

There is a further caveat to the findings of the experimental studies on the effects of literacy discussed above. The kinds of cognition being tested in these studies are those that are privileged by the Western psychological tradition. For example, as Elinor Ochs and Tamar Kremer-Sadlik so insightfully demonstrated, talk in post-industrial U.S. families tends to favor language that reflects on children's experiences (2015) — a socialization practice that most certainly fosters a certain kind of approach to the experiences of others. This example demonstrates that we must take tests of social cognition, especially those that make no mention of relevant cultural and social processes, with a grain of salt. Further, the experimental findings on the effects of literacy on social cognition make all the more urgent more in-depth, ethnographic study of the lived social experiences of literacy students.

2.3 Social interaction and language use

Social interactionist research owes much to early scholarship on intersubjectivity, which was taken up perhaps most notably by phenomenology founder Edmund Husserl. Husserl's writings in turn influenced phenomenologists Alfred Schutz and Harold Garfinkel, among many others. Schutz aimed to address the puzzle surrounding on the one hand the impossibility of fully apprehending another person's experience, called "opacity of mind," and on the other hand our seeming effortless ability to infer what others mean, believe, and intend: "Neither that your lived experiences remain inaccessible to me nor that they are meaningless to me" (Schutz, 1967, p. 99). According to Husserl, the sharing of a mutual understanding (*Wechselverstndingung*) is made possible by empathy (*Einfühlung*). For many scholars adhering to Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity, then, this term encompasses both informational and emotional shared experience. As Duranti argued, however, a Husserlian intersubjectivity refers more broadly to a

basic "level of participation in a world that is co-habited even when no one is visible or hearable" (Duranti, 2010; p. 11). The notion of a "shared understanding", then, can be understood as being an *element* of intersubjectivity, but not its equivalent. More crucially, intersubjectivity is "not a *product* or an *effect* of communication but a *condition* for its possibility [emphasis in original]" (Duranti, 2010, p. 9).

The legacy of these early writings on intersubjectivity can be seen now in work on face-to-face interaction, including in the field of conversation analysis (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Goodwin, 2000; Heritage, 2007).

Conversation analysis offers a vehicle with which to dig deep into the data to understand how intersubjectivity manifests in everyday interactions. Indeed, since everyday interaction is the primordial site for human sociality (Schegloff, 1987), it is an ideal place to investigate shared understanding. Even the very sequence of a conversation itself serves as a structure that allows interactants to display, manage, and correct intersubjective understandings (Schegloff, 1992). As argued by He (2004), "participants' understanding of what each other means is dialogically based, in the sense that meaning is jointly constructed through interaction between both parties" (p. 201). Conversation analysis, then, affords an ideal methodological approach to investigating intersubjective understandings in interaction, which can be managed through epistemic and empathic resources such as the ones under investigation here.

How does intersubjectivity manifest in classroom interactions? Previous research on classroom interactions has revealed the utility of conversation analysis in that particular institution: Early CA work on classroom interactions studied the turn-taking organization of instruction, which led to the identification of the now well-known initiation-response-evaluation sequences, in which the teacher opens and closes the sequence. In an investigation of the

opportunities for participation in the classroom, Gene Lerner examined the consequences that teachers' initial turn design can have on subsequent student participation (1995). More recently, CA methods have been employed to investigate epistemics and, to a lesser extent, empathy, in a variety of classroom settings, to be discussed in the following pages.

Individual claims to knowledge can sometimes be at odds with the epistemic authority of an "expert" (Heritage, 2008), which may well be the case in the interactions of immigrants with institutions. As a group with shared experiences that are unknown to most outsiders, an immigrant group may well have additional incentive to assert claims to "knowing" about their norms, language, and other practices. On the other hand, when dealing with institutions, immigrants or other "outsiders" may be more likely to cede epistemic authority to institutional members, due to unfamiliarity with the systems, a language barrier, and/or fear about legal status. Previous research has shed light on the back-breaking working conditions and frequent exploitation of these immigrants, who nonetheless often do not access medical services (Zabin, 1993; Bade, 1993). As has been the case with previous work on medical interactions, a closer look at this community's dealings with institutions and how they negotiate knowledge states could be a step toward a better understanding of some of the most vulnerable people in our systems.

Goffman's interaction order approach (1983) demands that we conduct analysis with an eye for micro-level concerns of "face", epistemic authority and stance, and larger, macro-level societal issues. Such an approach takes the stance that these micro- and macro-level concerns cannot effectively be separated, and that the most valid study of any community, but especially particularly vulnerable communities, takes into consideration both levels of granularity.

2.3.1 Epistemics and empathy

Because this study is focused on the ways that members of this community demonstrate shared understandings in interaction, I am particularly interested in instances of epistemic and empathic stance-taking.

Epistemics is the field of conversation analysis concerned with "the management of rights and responsibilities related to knowledge and information" (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Some interactants may have more access than others to certain information — for example, information about one's own experiences (Sacks, 1984) — and therefore greater rights to it. Cultural knowledge, especially in a situation in which that culture's language and practices are threatened, is another such domain to which members of that culture would presumably have greater access. Therefore, in my investigation into epistemics in this community, I focus on knowledge relating to Mixtec culture and language.

An important area of conversation analytic work on epistemics is in news delivery sequences — conversations in which one person is giving news to another. Terasaki (2004[1976])) described news delivery "pre-sequences" as crucial to the management of whether and how the news delivery sequence will unfold. In short, the teller of the news must first determine whether it is, in fact, *news* to the recipient. The situation becomes even more complicated when the conversation is multi-party: As Goodwin (1979) observed in his "cigarettes" example, in such a scenario news that had been meant for one person may be directed toward someone else (if that news is determined to be already known by the intended recipient) or the teller may adjust the information altogether so that the news itself chances to reflect a change in his perception of his interlocutors' knowledge states. This navigation through

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the epistemic context within which a conversation unfolds means interlocutors have "a lively, real-time prospective orientation to the social distribution of knowledge" (Heritage, 2013, p. 3).

Of particular relevance to the population under study here, epistemics has also been deployed in work on second-language classrooms. Sert (2013) investigated the role of "epistemic status checks" — a common feature of teachers — in the language classroom, and their implication for the management of knowledge asymmetry in the learning environment.

Whereas an investigation into epistemics may reveal *informational* understanding, empathy reveals *emotional* understanding. Empathy is, broadly defined — the ability to share and understand the feelings of others. Both informational and emotional grounding are crucial in creating a shared understanding that makes possible a successful interaction. Emotion, however, may be "the most fundamental module in human interaction" (Hayashi, 1996). It is often characterized as not able to be controlled and therefore not rational. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994) argued that this thoughts-feelings dichotomy is incorrect and in fact detrimental — that humans rely on frequently on their emotional response to guide rational behavior. Indeed, empathy — the ability to understand and share another person's feelings — can be seen as a *cognitive* behavior that is based in emotion (Hayashi, 1996). These views of emotion and empathy, of course, situate the phenomenon within the mind of the individual, a notion with which Goodwin, Cekaite, and Goodwin (2012) take issue. Their analysis conceptualizes emotion as "organized within the flow of ongoing interaction as a contextualized, multiparty, and multimodal process" (18). They cite Bateson's critique of Ekman's famous work on human facial expressions, in which he argues that limiting study to what the individual can produce ignores the role of that expression as a communicative act. I take this position as well, viewing

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emotion and empathy in interaction as communicative acts tied to the progressivity and organization of human interaction.

Empathic moments can arise from epistemic ones. In the course of news- or story-telling, for example, the interactional project may shift from one primarily concerned with negotiating knowledge states to one concerned with affective affiliation. Heritage (2011) explored the navigation of domains of knowledge and experience that often arise in conversation. Interlocutors are expected to defer to a teller's knowledge of her own experience, as well as to affiliate with that experience. In other words, although I may have full rights to report on my own experience — especially an intensely emotional one — I will nevertheless anticipate that you will affiliate with my affective stance, despite your having not experienced the event. There is thus a tension between honoring epistemic authority and empathic obligation that interactants nevertheless frequently navigate quite seamlessly. Heritage's observation highlights the importance of affiliation to the study of empathy in conversation. Affiliation in conversation can be expressed in a number of ways, for example, as a listener's nods during the telling of a story (Stivers, 2008). Although affiliation and empathy have much in common, it is important to disentangle these phenomena (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013). In this dissertation, I conceive of affiliation as a conversational feature that can and often does display the larger phenomenon of empathy.

These questions of territories of knowledge and experience are particularly relevant in studying a marginalized ethnic group. Publicly sharing social knowledge and experiences is crucial to maintaining a group identity, especially one that is perceived as threatened.

In classroom interactions, epistemics research has investigated the role of "epistemic status checks" — a common feature of teachers — in the language classroom, and their

implication for the management of knowledge asymmetry in the learning environment (Sert, 2013). CA has also been used to investigate epistemic search sequences in a language classroom (Jakonen & Morton, 2013), the epistemic authority of a mathematics teacher (Koole, 2012), and embodied practices for contesting epistemic stances in an English classroom (Kääntä, 2014). Epistemics is understandably a highly useful construct for examining classroom talk, as its primary concern is with the distribution and management of knowledge. Still, few if any such studies have been conducted in the literacy classroom.

The role of empathy has been treated less prolifically in conversation analysis work on classroom interactions, though there has been work on teacher self-talk as a resource for eliciting empathy (Hall & Smotrova, 2013). More broadly, emotion or affect has been investigated by language learning researchers, who have noted, for example, that affect mediates learner motivation (Dörnyei, 1998), that emotional language carries more weight in a learner's L1 (Dewaele, 2008), and that second language learning can restructure emotional conceptualization in adult learners (Pavlenko, 2002). These findings, while certainly relevant for the current study, do not investigate empathy in particular, nor do they take talk-in-interaction as their point of departure. Furthermore, as is the case even for CA work on the classroom, they do not address low-literate adult learners.

This discussion of epistemic and empathic negotiation in conversation warrants a brief acknowledgment of similar concepts in other disciplines. In the field of social psychology, the information that is shared by interactants has been termed *common ground*. Common ground is by no means independent from the fields of pragmatics and conversation analysis, as its founders stress the important contributions of H.P. Grice and Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson to the study of understanding in communication (Clark & Brennan, 1991).

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According to Gricean conversational maxims (Grice, 1975), interlocutors are expected to abide by the maxims of quality and quantity. Obeying the maxim of quantity in particular — that one should not give more or less information than is needed — requires an understanding of the conversational common ground. In other words, in order for me to accurately calculate how much information I should give you in a conversation, I need to have some understanding of what information you already have. As argued by Heller, Grodner, and Tanenhaus in 2008, "accounts of the felicity conditions for making assertions, asking questions, and using referring expressions often appeal to the distinction between information in the interlocutors' common ground and information that is privileged to the speaker or the addressee" (p. 831). They found, as did Hanna, Tanenhaus, and Trueswell (2003), that in a conversational context, both common ground (information known to both speaker and addressee) and perspective (referring to privileged information, i.e., information known only to one party) play an important role in disambiguation of a referent.

Though epistemics is not a term commonly used in psychology, empathy most certainly is. In its basic sense, empathy refers to the ability to understand the feelings of others; that is, to share an emotional experience. Much of what is known in psychology about empathy is derived from studies of atypical populations. Disorders and conditions such as schizophrenia and autism are believed to have a deleterious effect on the empathy response.

A related concept in psychology is that of *theory of mind*, which is roughly defined as the ability to attribute mental states to oneself and to others; that is, to understand that others have mental states that are different from one's own. Theory of mind has its origins in biological anthropology, with a series of experiments investigating chimpanzees' understanding of the intentions, beliefs and knowledge states of others (Premack & Woodruff, 1978). This seminal

research coined the term "theory of mind," with the argument that such a system must be called a theory because it would be impossible to directly observe such states. Since its origins, theory of mind has been applied to a myriad of fields. As a sort of proxy for some dimensions of social cognition, theory of mind has been especially relevant in research on autism (Baron-Cohen, Leslie, & Frith, 1985), child development (Perner, Leekam, & Wimmer, 1987), and schizophrenia (Brüne, 2005; Pickup & Frith, 2001). Social psychological work has tied perspective-taking and empathy to interpreting aggressive interactions (Mummendey, Linneweber, & Löschper, 1984), and fostering social relations (Galinsky, Ku, and Wang, 2005), suggesting real-world social consequences for the ability to understand others. Critiques of the "theory of mind" model, however, argue that psychology has placed an exaggerated importance on theory of mind (Wilce, 2004; Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001), and resulting concepts such as intentionality and agency that are tied so intrinsically to theory of mind as we know it (Duranti, 2004).

Philosophy has posited the confusingly named *theory theory*, which holds that people generate theories about others' minds (just as they construct theories about the physical environment), and *rationality theory*, which posits that people assign to others a set of propositional attitudes that make a rational agent emerge (Goldman, 2012). More recently, *simulation theory* has proposed that people mentalize another person's point of view: They inhabit an imagined version of the world from another's perspective. Simulation theory has been linked to the neuroscience literature on mirror neurons — the set of premotor neurons that fire both when performing an action (e.g., grasping an object) and when witnessing another individual perform that same action. This work on mirror neuron systems seemed to have provided concrete neurological evidence pointing to this idea that we simulate the experiences of

others. It remains unclear, though, whether mental state attribution is in fact a necessary consequence of a mirror neuron system (Shanton & Goldman, 2010). Work done so far on the mirror system certainly points to a "mirroring" of others' actions, but finding that same symmetry in mental states or beliefs is more problematic. Further, the aforementioned work on mirror neurons has been questioned by scholars who argue that the mirror neuron system has been generalized from monkeys to humans without proper validation (Hickok, 2009).

Cognitive linguists have argued for the perspectival nature of language — that specific linguistic constructions encourage a particular construal of the world and "embodies a perspective onto the world" (Geeraerts, 2006; p. 4). The consequences of this language-dependent worldview have been argued to pervade cognitive domains such as space, as mentioned in a previous section (Bowerman & Choi, 2003; Levinson, 2003), time (Núñez & Sweetzer, 2006), and number (Lakoff & Núñez, 2000). These studies demonstrate the malleability of the human perspective-taking ability, which could have important consequences for our ability to take the perspective of another in interaction, as in the case of empathic communication.

While intriguing, these accounts of perspective-taking still privilege the individual mind and neglect the role of social interaction, with a few exceptions. Our ability to share understandings and empathize with others evolved in and emerges through interaction, not in a laboratory setting. A social interactionist approach to how we demonstrate our understanding of another's experience is needed to enrich the field of study on human sociality. One step in this direction is to investigate epistemic and empathic stances in interaction — two ways this perspective-taking manifests in real-life conversation.

In interaction, epistemic and empathic stances can be asserted through various means. For this project, I focus on (1) repair as a resource for establishing and assert epistemic authority, (2) assessments as ways of displaying or soliciting empathy, and (3) metalinguistic discourse as a resource for both epistemic and empathic stance-taking.

2.3.1.1 Repair and reformulation, and their relevance to epistemics

Repair, defined as the way interlocutors identify and manage problems in speaking, hearing, and understanding in conversation, is an example of a conversational resource that requires perspective-taking. Repair can be initiated by the speaker of the trouble (self-initiation) or by another speaker (other-initiation), with either party completing the sequence by providing the repair itself. Self-repair requires an understanding of what one's recipient(s) had expected to hear, while other-initiated repair, requires an idea of what the original speaker might have meant to say.

Similarly to repair, reformulation offers interlocutors a strategy for managing possible problems with appropriateness or ambiguity in conversation. Reformulation of one's own talk may signal that the speaker projects a possible misunderstanding (Schegloff, 1992), while reformulation of another speaker's talk can reveal the second speaker's candidate understanding of the original utterance (see Heritage, 1985, and Drew, 2003, for discussions of reformulation in institutional settings).

Initiation of repair and reformulation can be means of epistemic stance-taking. Open-class repairs such as "what?" convey that the repair initiator did not grasp the previous utterance (because of a problem with hearing or understanding, for example). Reformulations, on the other

hand, may function like as a correction, in which the initiator is asserting relatively greater knowledge about the topic.

2.3.1.2 Assessment and its relevance to empathy

In offering assessments of another's experience, the degree to which a recipient publicly takes the perspective of the teller depends on the recipient's access to the teller's experience, as well as the listener's stance toward it. At a basic level, assessments allow for the display of interest and a relationship to and an understanding of the topic (Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992). Assessments frequently have an affiliative function as well. In the case of second assessments in particular, a speaker has an opportunity to align and therefore empathize with the previous speaker's stance. As argued by Goodwin and Goodwin, assessments "provide an example of how affect and the display of emotion are organized as interactive phenomena" (1992, p. 171). Heritage (2011) described subjunctive assessments, a kind of empathic affiliation in which the recipient explicitly indicates that she would feel the same way as the teller. This empathic resource is a clear signal that the recipient has not only taken the perspective of the teller, but also hearably affiliated with the teller's stance toward the experience. Empathic assessments are not without complication, as the evaluation of another individual's experience risks encroaches on another's person's subjectivity (Heritage, 2011). If successful, however, these kinds of assessments can help to interactively build "co-experience" (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; p. 155). The assessment sequence is therefore an ideal locus to investigate social affiliation.

Assessments are common in classrooms, though the interactional business of prototypical classroom assessment sequences is to evaluate student work rather than to empathize or affiliate.

These pedagogical assessment sequences occur frequently in the literacy classroom; however, these canonical classroom assessments often give way to more affiliative assessment sequences in which the instructors and/or students express solidarity with one another. Through an analysis of these assessment sequences, we can see how even one of the most typical classroom interactions — teacher assessment of student work — can act to build group affiliation.

2.3.1.3 Metalanguage and its relevance to epistemics and empathy

Metalanguage, or language about language, can shed light onto speakers' attitudes toward or beliefs about their own language and the language of others. When speakers make value judgments about English or Spanish, for example, they are engaging in metalinguistic communication. Metalanguage is also the means through which we express and absorb cultural norms about communicative practices, explicitly or implicitly. For example, rules about language use such as "I before E except after C" or "don't swear in front of the children" are metalinguistic in nature.

Metalanguage can manifest less overtly as well. For example, asking for someone's name, commenting on a past conversation, and reported speech are all ways to comment on language and communication. Linguistic devices such as discourse markers may also be analyzed as metalanguage, as can literary analysis and other literacy events. To distinguish between these multiple kinds of metacommunication, Laihonen described metalanguage as language about language, and metapragmatics as language about language *use* in his work on speakers of Rumanian Banat (2008).

Because metalanguage so frequently expresses and reifies prevailing attitudes about language, from the level of the discourse marker to the novel, metalanguage is frequently studied

by scholars of language ideologies. Perhaps chief among these, Silverstein has analyzed speakers' awareness of their language use (1981). Important contributions to metalinguistic discourse as reflecting language ideologies have also been made by Hill (1998), Woolard (2005), and Kroskrity (2004). Analyzing metalanguage in face-to-face interactions can shed light on how these ideologies emerge in regular conversation — even those seemingly not centered on language.

Not surprisingly, the literacy classroom is particularly rich with metalanguage. Discussions about the alphabet, proper pronunciation, and writing techniques abound. Perhaps less obviously, discussions about language use in context can also be found in the classroom.

Metalanguage (or, more broadly, metacommunication) can often be analyzed in terms of epistemics. At the level of discourse markers, for example, markers of evidentiality are an explicit means of communicating who knows what and how. At the metapragmatic level, to assert one's opinion about a particular linguistic feature or practice is to stake an epistemic claim about that language.

Metalanguage may also be a means of communicating or soliciting empathy. Reported speech within a narrative, for example, can be a resource for achieving "empathic alignment" (Heritage, 2011; p. 177). Complaints and compliments about communicative competence can also give way to empathic moments (these are especially common in language classrooms).

Because of the many ways we as humans connect through and *over* communication, such metalinguistic communication can serve as a window into the underlying intersubjective nature of social interaction.

2.4 Conclusion

This review has aimed to provide an orientation to some of the background literature on language, human sociality, and social affiliation, from language evolution to language acquisition and socialization, and finally, to the social interactionist tradition, which offers much insight into the ways that repair, assessment, and metalanguage can be analyzed in terms of their contribution to epistemic and empathic moments in conversation and, in turn, to intersubjectivity in interaction.

Because of the inherently interdisciplinary and temporally far-reaching nature of social interaction scholarship, a nod to the contributions of several disparate but related disciplines was warranted. Also for this reason, however, it is impossible to discuss all the relevant scholarship, so there remain countless authors and strands of research that have gone unacknowledged but nonetheless left indelible impressions on this and future projects in this vein.

CHAPTER 3

The Mixtec people in the U.S.:

A history of migration, discrimination, and cultural identification

The indigenous Mixtec (or *Mixteco* in Spanish) ethnic group originates in what is now the Mexican state of Oaxaca as well as parts of Guerrero and Puebla. The language they speak is typically also referred to as Mixtec or *Mixteco*. However, as is the case with most indigenous language and ethnic group names, the origin of this classification is a bit convoluted. The name Mixtec in fact is based on a word from another indigenous language, Nahuatl. The Nahuatl word *mixtecatl* translates approximately to "people of the clouds". That Nahuatl word was, presumably, adopted by the Spanish colonizers, and the name *Mixteco* has been embraced by members of the community.

The Mixtec community was one of the largest pre-Columbian groups in Mesoamerica, with a population of more than 1 million before the Spanish conquest. Like other indigenous populations, their numbers have since dwindled, to about 500,000 remaining in Mexico. There has been a diaspora of Mixtecans, primarily to California, with poverty, drought, and crop failures due to erosion being some of the most common reasons for migration.

A visit to San Miguel Cuevas (the hometown of Santiago Ventura Morales, who was convicted and then cleared of murder in Oregon), demonstrated firsthand the debilitating effects of migration on indigenous towns. Much of San Miguel Cuevas' young male population had left to find work, leaving the town conspicuously quiet. One young female resident of San Miguel Cuevas joked that men there were "like an endangered species." She and her friends laughed at the comparison, but the consequences are sobering: When young people leave, these

communities are left without able-bodied people to work on infrastructure projects, and the pool

of qualified community members from which to elect town leaders is diminished.

Figure 3.1: The town of San Martín Peras, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Figure 3.2: The empty main square in the town of San Miguel Cuevas, Oaxaca, Mexico.

One young man living in San Miguel Cuevas had returned to his hometown after living in California after he was deported (he did not give details about his circumstances behind his deportation). This young man's story exemplifies another potential path for transnational migrants, especially in the years since the 2007-2008 financial crisis, when deportations and voluntary repatriation has become more common among Mexicans in the U.S. According to the Pew Research Center, 1 million Mexicans left the U.S. for Mexico between 2009 and 2014 (Pew Research Center, 2015). Repatriation of this kind might bring young people back to their communities, but the upheaval this causes brings its own set of problems back to the hometowns. The transition is especially difficult for children who were born in the U.S. and brought back to Mexico with their families, a trend that has been increasing since 2010 when the U.S. began ramping up deportation efforts (Lakhani & Jacobo, 2016).

Despite a recent rise in repatriations, Mexican-origin people continue to make up a large share of people living within U.S. borders. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 685,000 people identified as Latinos of indigenous origin — a number that grew from 407,000 in 2000. Mixtec migrants often find employment in the agricultural sector, and the Mixtec community in Southern California is no exception, with many finding work picking strawberries. Other California metro areas that have received a large number of Mixtec-origin immigrants include Fresno, Santa Maria, and San Diego.

3.1 The Mixtec community in the United States

Mexican immigration is a contentious issue in the U.S., especially in the state of California, which receives 37 percent of all Mexican immigrants arriving on U.S. soil (Zong & Batalova, 2014). Mexican immigrants are highly visible not only because of their high numbers,

but also because they are the face of the debate about immigration that is a key dimension of American political discourse — a debate that shows no signs of abating. In 2015, then-Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump famously claimed he would build a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border to keep out the "drugs," "crime," and "rapists" that he said were entering from Mexico (Kopan, 2016). Unfounded though this rhetoric might have been, it struck a chord with a number of Americans who resented the presence of immigrants. It also obscured the reality of the immigrant population. Even immigrants from Mexico do not constitute a monolithic group — indigenous Mexicans in particular frequently identify with as members of their ethnic group before identifying as Mexicans, and may lack proficiency in Spanish, as discussed elsewhere in this dissertation.

Indigenous immigrants such as the Mixtec are subject to prejudice from many sectors of society, including — if not more so — other Mexican-origin people. To cite one example, in 2012 the Mixtec community in Ventura County lobbied a local school board to ban the ethnic slur *oaxaquita/o* (literally, "little Oaxacan") from schools (Esquivel, 2012). The slur was used primarily by other children of Mexican origin but who did not identify as indigenous.

This discrimination against indigenous people may be partially attributed to racist ideologies that pervade Mexican society. The colonial Spanish government established a caste system that stratified society according to phenotype with white Spaniards at the top and indigenous and African people at the bottom. The castes were abolished in the early 19th century, but the economic, political, and educational disadvantages that had plagued members of the lower castes remained, as systematic, state-sponsored racism gave way to more covert forms of prejudice.

The legacy of these attitudes and policies that marginalized indigenous people persists both in Mexico and among Mexican-origin people in the United States. Within the Mexican-American community, which in general is oppressed based on cultural and linguistic differences, socioeconomic status, and other factors (Dovidio, Gluszek, John, Ditlmann, & Lagunes, 2010; Lee & Ahn, 2012; Torres & Ong, 2010), darker and more indigenous-looking Mexican-Americans typically have even lower education and income levels than their lighter-skinned counterparts (Arce, Murguia, & Frisbie, 1987; Telles & Murguia, 1990, 1996) and therefore even less social capital. Owing to their low social capital relative to native-born Americans and even non-indigenous Mexican immigrants, Oaxacan people have reported a reluctance to speak their native language in public (Reyes, 2012) and feeling unwelcome in schools (Barillas-Chon, 2010), not to mention the fear and uncertainty posed by the possibility of deportation for the many indigenous immigrants who arrive in the U.S. without papers.

One of the consequences of this marginalization of indigenous Mexicans is limited access to education. Indigenous Mexican immigrants frequently arrive in the U.S. having received little formal education in Mexico and therefore very limited exposure to postindustrial pedagogical models and their accompanying socialization practices. Even those who have had some formal education are unlikely to have benefited much — especially those whose native language is not Spanish. Although indigenous languages have gained some measure of acceptability in Mexico since the assimilationist 1800s — children are no longer physically punished for using their native languages — schools still rely on Spanish as the primary language of instruction. The state of Oaxaca does in fact have a system of "bilingual" schools, a label that pays lip service to a recognition of students' linguistic backgrounds, but these schools are often bilingual in name only. Lamentably, many such "bilingual" teachers do not actually speak the indigenous language

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spoken in the community, a result of nepotism in the schools' hiring practices (J.J. Caballero, personal communication, Aug. 27, 2015).

The quality of Oaxaca's primary school education aside, there is a perhaps more decisive obstacle to young Oaxacans' education: a lack of schools in the smaller towns. In the town of San Miguel Cuevas, near the municipality of Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca, a group of young women told me that no one from their town studies beyond primary school because that would require daily trips to Juxtlahuaca, a 50-minute drive on a windy unpaved road. Aside from the difficulty and expense of the journey, these young people's families could hardly afford to lose their help in the household. And young people in San Miguel Cuevas are fortunate in comparison to those from more far-flung villages or ranchos, who often lack access even to primary school. Indeed, many immigrants to California arrive with little to no formal education, having missed the main point of access to the Spanish language (as well as English, in some cases), literacy, and numeracy.

Figure 3.3: A winding dirt road outside San Miguel Cuevas, Oaxaca.

Upon arrival in the United States, these skills may be gained through adult literacy classes and other services provided by community organizations such as the one that served as the field site for this study. Of course, such skills are much more difficult to gain in adulthood, owing both to the diminished plasticity of the brain and to demanding work and family schedules. Nonetheless, these literacy and other classes are generally well-attended by men and women of all ages.

Such literacy classes present an interesting complication: They are taught in Spanish, even though many students do not speak Spanish proficiently. Students, therefore, are first learning to read and write in a *second* language. As outlined in the previous chapter, there is evidence that literacy has an effect on skill in encoding *oral* language as well as in other aspects of cognition. Mixtec speakers learning to read and write in Spanish, then, differ in non-trivial ways from most previous subjects of literacy or SLA studies. The experiences of adult Mixtec speakers learning to read and write in Spanish thus adds an important perspective to the existing scholarship on adult literacy and second language acquisition, most of which has relied on either illiterate adults learning to read and write in their native language, or already literate adults learning a second language.

3.2 The Mixtec language

These students' complex multilingualism is not usually viewed as a resource, but rather as a hurdle to overcome. This ideology about the Mixtec language is a source of discrimination for its speakers and, as in other cases of linguistic prejudice, has been taken up by its own speakers. This ideology is a product of longstanding stigmatization of indigenous culture, language, and ways of life for the benefit of the colonizing Spaniards and, later, the ruling

mestizo and Spanish-descent classes. It nonetheless has enormous power even today, and even in an entirely new setting such as the United States. One powerful inheritance of this history is the popular belief that Mexico's indigenous languages are *dialectos* (dialects), a belief shared by speakers of indigenous languages themselves. This term that would imply that they are simple variants of a dominant language, as Southern American English is a variant of English. In fact, Mixtec has a completely separate history from European languages; indeed, Spanish and English are more closely related than are Spanish and Mixtec. The Mixtec language belongs to the Otomanguean language family of Mexico. It is in fact misleading to refer to Mixtec as a single language, as there are multiple varieties that are not necessarily mutually intelligible. As an indigenous language with vastly different origins from Spanish, Mixtec speakers may have a difficult time learning Spanish, especially if they come from a community that almost exclusively speaks Mixtec (as is the case for some of these literacy students). An important difference is that Mixtec is tonal, while Spanish is not. Further, the original Mixtec writing system was originally logographic, as can be seen in the few pictographic writings — called codices — that remain. Figure 4 features a section of the Codex Zouche-Nuttall (named for its publisher and donor), which depicts the genealogies of several 11th- and 12th-century rulers of the Mixtec kingdom Tilantongo.
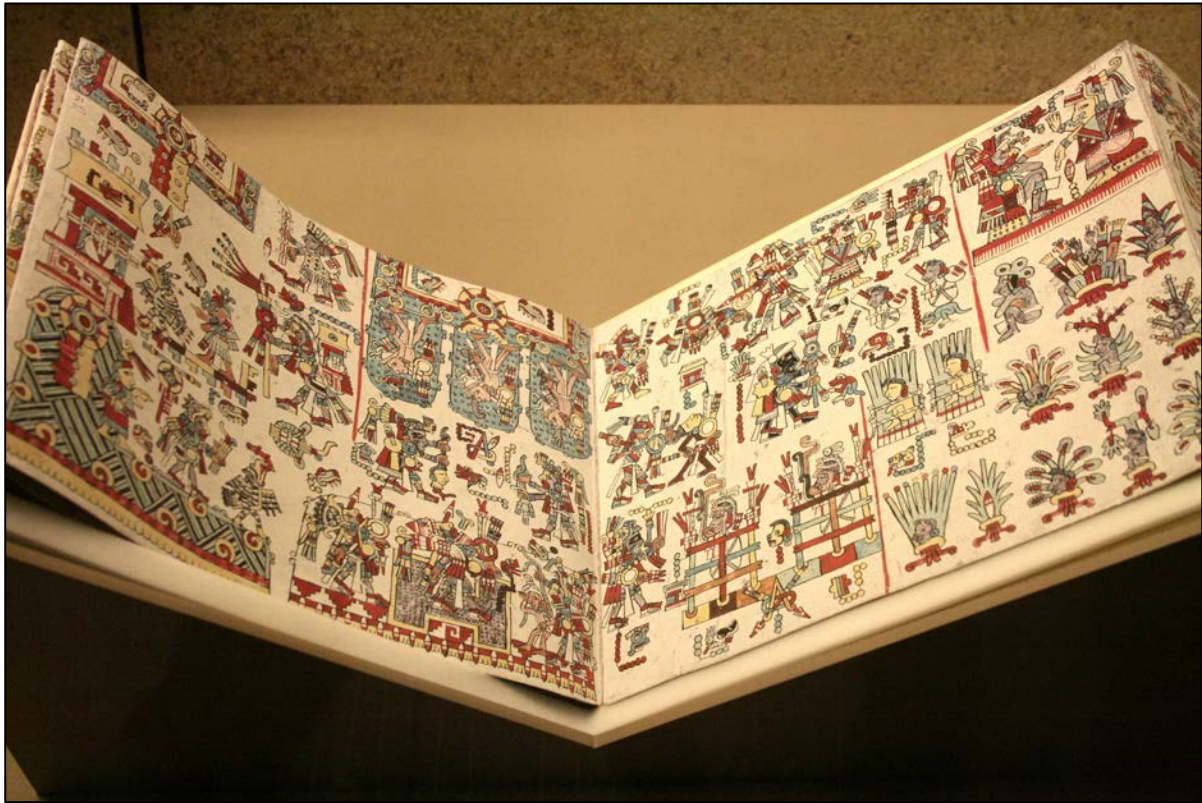
Figure 3.4: Section of the Codex Zouche-Nuttall, depicting 11th- and 12th-century Mixtec rulers.

However, early Spanish policies to destroy the codices, as well as later efforts by the Mexican government led speakers to adopt a Latin alphabet (Benton, 1999), which is used today.

Many varieties of Mixtec are designated as "endangered" owing to the diminishing number of speakers (Moseley, 2010). Mixtec has been the subject of revitalization efforts by the indigenous community. One outcome of these efforts was the establishment of the Mixtec Language Academy (*Ve'e Tu'un Savi* in Mixtec), based in Oaxaca, whose aim has been to develop orthographies for the Mixtec variants (Benton, 1999).

Figure 3.5: A Mixtec picture alphabet, designed and distributed by a consortium of agencies including UNICEF and the Mexican academic institution CIESAS. The multiple representation of some words reflects the multitude of variants of the language.

An interesting feature of Mixtec speakers is that those remaining in Mexico have less

interest in maintaining the language for future generations, arguing that Spanish and even

English will be more useful for their children and grandchildren. However, Mixtec speakers who

have migrated from their hometowns adopt a different attitude, viewing the language as a crucial

link to their culture, history, and community (J.J. Caballero, personal communication). For this

reason, many language revitalization efforts are based in the United States, primarily in

California.

Still, many Mixtec speakers in Mexico and the U.S. alike continue to view their mother

tongue as inferior to Spanish or English. In interviews conducted in both California and Mexico,

Mixtec speakers consistently referred to the indigenous languages as dialects. In the interview

transcript below, a female Mixtec speaker describes Mixtec as a dialect and other languages as

languages (IR and IE designate "Interviewer" and "Interviewee," respectively):

> IR: Mucha gente llama al Mixteco- dice que el Mixteco es dialecto, pero
> pero, al menos alli, nosotros decimos que el Mixteco es idioma.
> Completamente diferente del español, no?
>
> *Many people call Mixtec- they say that Mixtec is a dialect, but but, at
> least there, we say that Mixtec is a language. Completely different from
> Spanish, no?*
>
> IE: Sí. Algunas personas- yo digo, bueno, es que por ejemplo, el idioma es
> Frances, e Ingles y todo eso no? Pero algunas dicen que es nos- bueno,
> nosotros lo conocemos por dialect.
>
> *Yes. Some people- I mean, well, it's that for example, a language is
> French, and Spanish, and all that, right? But some say that it's, we- well,
> we know is as a dialect.*

This attitude, internalized by many Mixtec speakers as is evidenced by the interview

above, no doubt confounds the assumption made by Americans unaware of this history who

assume these immigrants speak Spanish because they come from Mexico. This assumption has

caused various problems for Mixtec speakers as they navigate the complex U.S. medical, legal, and educational systems.

3.2.1 Mixtec and health care

A community assessment conducted by a team of public health researchers found that only 57% of the indigenous community in Ventura County report having access to health care services (Maxwell, Young, Crespi, Vega, Cayetano, & Bastani, 2015). These challenges to health care access for indigenous migrants are made even more urgent given the physically demanding nature of the work they tend to do upon arrival in the U.S. Much of the Mixtec community on California's Central Coast finds employment picking or packing strawberries, work that is tremendously taxing and can result in back injuries and pesticide ingestion, among other health issues.

Figure 3.6: Farmworkers pick strawberries in Ventura County, California.

Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics identifies farm labor as one of the riskiest forms of employment, citing 19,700 work-related injuries or illnesses among crop production workers in 2011, a number that some scholars believe is tremendously underreported (Leigh, Du, & McCurdy, 2014).

Indigenous migrants also must contend with the mental health consequences of transborder migration and the oppression they face on both sides of the border. The immigration process itself is a trauma that can affect psychological health (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005), while post-migration, the acculturation process is often also a source of profound stress for immigrants (Finch, Frank, & Vega, 2004). At least one exploratory study examining indigenous migrants specifically has suggested that this community is particularly susceptible to mental distress owing to perceived discrimination (Lee, Donlan, Cardozo, & Paz, 2013). The physical and mental stressors associated with migration, hard labor, and discrimination make access to health care services particularly critical among indigenous Mexicans in the U.S. Despite this urgency, the indigenous community is less likely to seek or receive such services. One reason for this is the language barrier.

Language plays an important role in providing or hindering access to health care services everywhere, but for speakers of a less common indigenous language, the language barrier is all the more salient. Linda Ford, the CEO of the foundation of Natividad Hospital in Salinas, California, recounted hospital staff's frustration with the language barrier in an interview with Public Radio International: "I first went into the emergency department and asked one of the doctors, 'Is there anything you need in this emergency department.' And he was so frustrated and just said, 'I can't talk to my patients, I cannot talk to my patients'" (Porzucki, 2016). To bridge

the communication gap between patients and health care providers, the hospital launched an indigenous interpretation program, which now trains and provides interpreters of Mixteco as well as other Mesoamerican languages, such as Triqui and Zapotec. The community center that is this study's field site has also begun training speakers of indigenous languages to serve as health care interpreters. Still, the number of available interpreters does not yet meet the needs of the community.

3.2.2 Mixtec in the courts

The 1986 trial and conviction of a young Mixtec man for the murder of another migrant in Oregon illustrate the importance of language access in the courts. The trial of Santiago Ventura Morales and its aftermath drew the attention of linguistic anthropologists (Haviland, 2003; De León, 1995), legal scholars (De Muniz, 1999) and national news media alike (Associated Press, 1988; Carlin, 1992).

Morales' trial was rife with questionable translations (e.g., of witness testimony, police reports, evidence, etc.), and no access to Mixtec. For witness testimony in Mixtec, a Spanish-English interpreter was provided, showing no appreciation for the fact that Mixtec is actually completely unrelated to Spanish. In one example of the court's ignorance of Mixtec, court transcripts (reproduced in De Muniz, 1999) document an exchange in which the interpreter told the court that the witness was not speaking Spanish and that she could not translate his testimony (the name "Mestican" used here is a mispronunciation of *Mixtec*):

```
Court: Would you translate what he said, please?
Interpreter: That was Mestican; I don't understand.
Court: You have to tell us what he says.
Interpreter: It was Mestican words.
Court: Very well.
District Attorney: I would ask Mrs. Roche [interpreter] to tell us whether
she knows what these Mestica words are?
Interpreter: No, I don't.
```

Though Morales was convicted of murder in 1986, three of the jurors in the trial immediately regretted going along with the "guilty" verdict and teamed up with a group of activists and philanthropists to lobby for Morales' release. Morales' murder conviction was overturned by a judge in 1991, citing a violation of Morales' rights. He has since learned English, earned his bachelor's degree, and become a social worker and activist. The case had a lasting legacy on language policy in Oregon, as it led the state Supreme Court to make changes to its language access and interpreter services.

3.2.3 Mixtec in the schools

California schools are generally well equipped to serve Spanish-speaking students, even if they arrive without any English skills. As of the 2015-16 school year, 22 percent of students were designated as English learners, according to the California Department of Education web site. Most English learners in California schools — 83.5 percent — speak Spanish at home. For children who arrive without Spanish or English, however, as is the case for many recently arrived indigenous children, schools struggle to identify and meet their educational needs. Teachers may assume that children from Mexico speak Spanish even when they do not. When they do not appear to respond to either language, school staff may assume the child has hearing or behavioral problems. (Gerety, 2014). Increasingly, school districts throughout California have enlisted interpreters to address the needs of indigenous students (Barbassa, 2003; Lanham,

2013), though there continues to be a shortage of adequately trained interpreters, as is the case in hospitals and the courts as well.

3.3 Indigenous cultural values

Mexican indigenous culture is imbued with a strong sense of community, which has manifested in "an ancient, time-tested form of essentially democratic community governance" in the indigenous communities in Mexico (Kearney & Besserer, 2004). These common-property systems exist to this day in Mexico, functioning largely independently of the national or state governments thanks to the passage in 1998 of the Law of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Communities of the State of Oaxaca, which recognized indigenous communities' autonomy. One important component of this communal governance model is the system of community service obligations such as holding public office (*cargo*) or contributing to local infrastructure and conservation projects (*tequio*). These duties might entail helping build a new town gazebo, for example, or preparing food for the annual saint's day festival.

At the 2015 saint's day celebration in the rural mountain town of San Juan Mixtepec, I met several young people who were visiting from the United States, where they had moved for work, to help and participate. Some of these former residents had clearly spent a good deal of time in the U.S., as evidenced by their strong English skills and American-style dress. The pull of this festival for people who lived thousands of miles away — and for whom travel poses a significant financial burden and possibly even the danger of being detained at the border — demonstrates the importance of the festival and the fulfillment of community duties to Mixtec identity maintenance (Rieger, 2015). (See Ochoa, 2005, for a vivid description of the San Juan Mixtepec saint's day celebration.)

Figure 3.7: Revelers and musicians honor the patron saint of San Juan Mixtepec, Oaxaca.

This longstanding system of communal labor has been disrupted, however, by the explosion of migration out of Oaxaca among young people. Many indigenous communities in Mexico now struggle to fill important posts such as judge or mayor, and have fewer able-bodied residents who can participate in *tequio* projects. The threats to these systems have important implications for the indigenous communities in Mexico but also for migrants themselves, as the *cargo* and *tequio* systems are crucial to community identity (Ortiz, 2005).

The value of community and shared labor undoubtedly endures even among indigenous people who have migrated to the United States, which is largely understood to be an individualistic society. Mixtec migrants' community-mindedness is evident in the establishment of the community organization that served as the field site for this project — the organization

even sponsors a youth group called *tequio*, a reference to the communal labor system back in Mexico.

This communal orientation undoubtedly has important consequences for social affiliation as it emerges in interactions among members of this community.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

4.1 Study settings

The following section describes the ethnographic settings in which research for this study was conducted: (1) an adult literacy class for indigenous migrants in Southern California, the primary data collection site, and (2) various Mixtec towns in Oaxaca, Mexico.

4.1.1 Literacy class at indigenous community center

Data collection for this project took place primarily at an adult literacy class held at a community center in a rural town in Southern California, north of Los Angeles. The center serves Mexican immigrants of indigenous origin, particularly from the Mixtec ethnic group. The class, held most weekday evenings, is usually attended by 6-12 students, with attendance varying based on seasonal demands (many students work in the agricultural sector).

There is a wide range of literacy skills among the students, with some able to read and answer questions about a whole short story, and some unable to write the alphabet or their own names. The main teacher, Felix, has been trained in literacy pedagogy. Two additional teachers, Griselda and Inez, often take over the course so that Felix can offer one-on-one assistance to the less advanced students or participate in other activities. The class uses materials from the adult education program designed by the Mexican government. The class is conducted almost entirely in Spanish, even though some students have limited Spanish proficiency. For most students, Spanish is actually their second language, and in some cases, their third or even fourth, behind other indigenous languages.

Aside from providing classes, the indigenous community center seeks to empower and give a voice to marginalized Mixtec people in its community. This organization, run and maintained mostly by people of Mixtec origin, seeks to provide a haven for new immigrants, orienting them to life in the United States and offering a variety of services, aside from literacy classes, including legal assistance and resources and information about health care and school registration. One service provided by the center is a class for new parents, in which they learn techniques to care for their newborn and themselves, both physically and emotionally. The center also holds domestic violence and mental health workshops and classes, including a workshop designed specifically for men, to teach positive relationship behaviors.

Thanks in large part to the organization's advocacy, efforts are under way to increase indigenous immigrants' access to crucial public services such as education, health care, legal aid, and public safety through an increase in translation and interpretation services. The organization has partnered with school districts, local police departments, and other agencies to provide translation and interpretation services. The center also trains and provides interpreters to schools, to help administrators and Mixtec students and parents better communicate.

4.1.2 Oaxaca, Mexico

Additional complementary fieldwork was done in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, the home region of most of the study participants, where I conducted ethnographic observations and interviews, took field notes and photographs, and obtained audio-visual recordings of various public events. This research took place in Oaxaca City and several smaller towns in the La Mixteca region, including San Juan Mixtepec, San Martin Peras, and San Miguel Cuevas — towns that many Mixtec immigrants to the U.S. call home. While in Oaxaca, I conducted

interviews with several Mixtec speakers, including the Mixtec language scholar Juan Julián Caballero, with whom I had the opportunity to study the Mixtec language and culture for several weeks thanks to a Foreign Language and Area Studies grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

4.2 Participants

The participants whose interactions were analyzed for this study are indigenous Mexican immigrants living and working in Southern California and attending literacy classes at the community center, as well as instructors of the literacy class, some of whom also identify as indigenous. Most of these participants identify as members of the Mixtec ethnic group. The participants were recruited at the literacy class, with the permission of the organization's director and the course instructors, and participants gave their consented orally.

In Oaxaca, interview participants were also speakers of Mixtec, recruited for interviews through informal conversations. For the interviews, participants gave their consent orally as well.

4.3 Research and analysis

As an investigation of social interaction among a particular community, this project required the use of methods designed to document spontaneous, face-to-face interactions as well as methods that would elucidate participants' lived experiences. To this end, the project makes use of conversation analysis transcription and analysis, as well as ethnography, participant-observation, and interviews.

My connection to the community began in fall of 2013, when I began volunteering in the adult literacy classroom about twice a month, drawn to the community center's mission of

advocacy for the indigenous community in California. After about two years of assisting in the classroom, I began data collection. I began by audio-recording interactions between students and staff in the class for a few weeks, using the Voice Memo application on an iPhone. After obtaining several audio-recordings, I began conducting video-recordings using either a Canon VIXIA HF R400 camcorder or a GoPro Hero 3 with a tripod. The camcorder was positioned at the side of the class and above the students, in an attempt to capture as much of the classroom interaction as possible.

In all, I collected about 30 hours of combined audio- and video-recorded interactions in the literacy classroom at the community center, which forms the basis of my data analysis for this project. I also engaged in ethnographic observations in the classroom as well as in the community and in Oaxaca, Mexico, the home region of these participants. Data was analyzed using conversation analysis and ethnomethodological methods.

4.3.1 Ethnography and participant-observation

As a classroom volunteer, I engaged in informal participant-observation of the community for about two years before I began more systematic ethnographic observations. Through these observations, I realized that this literacy classroom, while ostensibly intended for the acquisition of literacy skills, was also a place for social affiliation — for negotiating knowledge states and displaying empathy. After initial observations steered me toward an investigation of interactive construction of social solidarity, I sought to identify the ways that participants affiliated with one another and with the center staff, within the context of the literacy class. I was also interested in the ways that students were socialized into classroom practices, and the way the Mixtec language was used as a resource both for learning and for social interaction.

Through these ethnographic observations, I identified the specific communicative resources participants used to negotiate social affiliation and knowledge states as they emerged in interaction.

Aside from my observations in the literacy classroom, which was my focal site, I also had the opportunity to attend various events aimed at promoting Mixtec culture and cultivating a sense of community among Mixtec speakers. One particularly informative event was an annual conference put together by the community center aimed at educating the public and practitioners (e.g., teachers, social workers, policymakers, etc.) about the particular needs and strengths of the indigenous Mexican community in California. This conference was an important source of background information on the community.

4.3.2 Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis offers a vehicle for conducting fine-grained analysis of interaction as it unfolds naturally. Because the project's focus is social and group affiliation as it emerges in interaction, this method was uniquely useful here.

The video- and audio-recorded data I collected was transcribed according to Jeffersonian transcription conventions Because the working language of this class is Spanish, I translated the talk, first morpheme by morpheme and then with a gloss in vernacular English. (See Appendix for a more detailed description of the transcription and notation methodology.)

I also used the multimodal conventions described by Goodwin (2013) to analyze eye gaze, body position, facial expression, and gesture, when such physical resources were available and relevant.

4.3.3 Interviews

I conducted several semi-structured interviews with students and community members, both at the main field site in Central California and in Oaxaca, Mexico. Though interviews were not analyzed using the same conversation analysis methods as the spontaneous interactions, they offered a glimpse into participants' lives outside the literacy class and an understanding of their lives prior to their migration. Through these interviews, for example, I learned that many of the students in the literacy class at the community center work most of the day in the strawberry fields and received little formal education in Mexico. Aside from the students in the literacy class, I also interviewed Mixtec speakers and in Oaxaca, Mexico, including Mixtec language scholar Juan Julián Caballero. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, which is a second language for most participants, and not in their native language of Mixtec, owing to my own limited proficiency in Mixtec.

CHAPTER 5

Repair as a resource for balancing epistemic authority and social affiliation

5.1 Introduction

In the classroom setting, teachers and students can deploy a range of semiotic resources to navigate the complex epistemic ecology that emerges through interaction (Goodwin, 2010; 2013). In accordance with the postindustrial "factory model" of knowledge transmission (Rogoff et al., 2003), the teacher is typically presumed to hold the K+ (or greater knowledge) position, while students are presumed to be in the K- (less knowledge) position (Heritage, 2010), though this distribution is by no means static. Depending on the domain of knowledge at hand, the student may well have greater epistemic authority than the teacher. However, because this is a less typical or expected epistemic status relative to that of the teacher, participants' means of managing this flipped epistemic asymmetry may differ in important ways from those typically employed by the teacher. Further, complications posed by the unusual nature of an adult literacy classroom serving a particular cultural group affect the trajectory of sequences of talk as well. Naturally occurring interactions in the adult literacy classroom for indigenous immigrants offer insight into the kinds of resources employed by participants to assert and cede epistemic authority. One such resource is repair.

One way to publicly question an interlocutor's epistemic status — and, in turn, to assert one's own rights to know about something — is to initiate repair. Repair, defined as the way interlocutors identify and manage problems in speaking, hearing, and understanding in conversation, has been argued to be a classic example of a conversational strategy that demonstrates perspective-taking. Indeed, in order to engage in repair of an interlocutor's talk,

one must have an idea of what she meant to say. Similarly, repair of one's own talk, especially after a repair initiation by someone other than the original speaker, requires an understanding of what the recipient(s) had expected or wanted to hear. Repair is a means by which interlocutors manage problems or misunderstandings in intersubjectivity, with third-position repair in particular providing "the last structurally provided defense of intersubjectivity in conversation" (Schegloff, 1992; p. 1304). At every subsequent turn in a conversation, interlocutors reveal their understanding of what came before.

A resource related to repair, reformulation also offers interlocutors a strategy for managing possible problems in conversation. Reformulation of one's own talk may signal the speaker's projected misunderstanding of her own talk (Schegloff, 1992), while reformulation of another interlocutor's talk could indicate that second speaker's candidate understanding of the first speaker's utterance (see Heritage, 1985, and Drew, 2003, for discussions of reformulation in institutional settings). Though relatively uncommon in ordinary conversations, reformulations occur frequently in classroom interactions, where they may serve as a kind of interactional feedback with important pedagogical implications (Nassaji, 2007). In the classroom, an instructor's reformulation can serve to validate a student's response while clarifying or elaborating upon it. In this case, the reformulation treats not a misunderstanding on the part of the teacher, but rather a possible misunderstanding on the part of the student (speaker), or perhaps of other students. In this way, reformulations can exhibit the qualities of what Jefferson called "embedded corrections," repair that occurs outside the currently relevant interactional business (1987).

In the following chapter, I present instances of repair and reformulation in the adult literacy classroom at the indigenous cultural center. These instances illustrate how repair,

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whether initiated by instructor, student, or other interlocutor may serve as a resource for social affiliation, at the level of the co-present community, or even the level of the larger cultural group. They also show how while repair trajectories share much in common with canonical classroom interactions as reported in the research on institutional talk, they also deviate somewhat due to this particular classroom's balance of authority. In other words, because the literacy class is taught for *and* by members of the indigenous Oaxacan community, the degree of epistemic authority granted to the instructor may be leveled somewhat with respect to the students. Taken together, the instances analyzed here show how repair, as a strategy for navigating epistemic imbalances, can offer a window into the ways that successfully deployed communicative strategies can demonstrate a shared sociocultural understanding among the speakers.

5.2 Embodied repair initiation

Excerpt 1 details an interaction in which the epistemic authority being claimed by teacher and student is distributed expectedly in terms of typical classroom interaction. In the interaction, the instructor, Gaby, points at various syllables on a white board at the front of the room, and the students, Victor and Mercedes, respond to her pointing action by reading the syllables aloud in unison. The teacher appears to hear one student, Victor, mispronouncing the syllable. She sequentially employs a variety of embodied actions to make visible her repair initiation and thus to make public his problematic pronunciation. (Excerpts are transcribed using Jeffersonian transcript notation, and names are abbreviated to the first three letters. See Appendix for transcription notation key.)
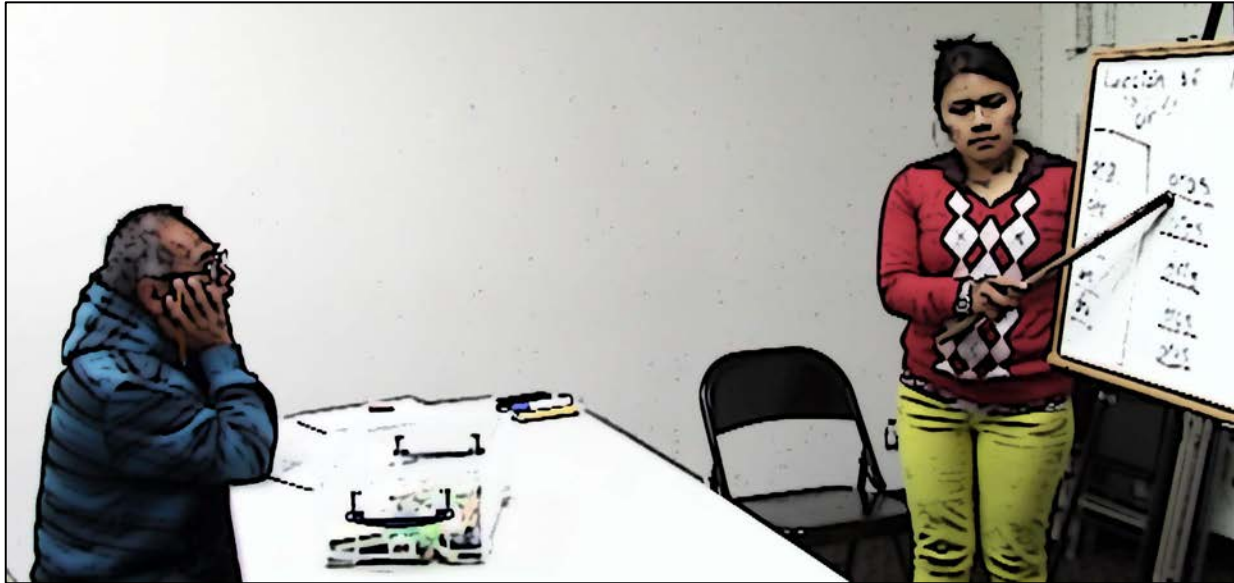
Figure 5.1: Student (Victor) recites syllables as teacher (Gaby) points to the white board.

Excerpt 1: The sound of the letter

((Gaby points to "dras" on board))

```
 1 Vic    dra

 2 Mer    dras:

 3 Gab    DRA[SS:

 4 Vic       [dra >dra<

((Students follow as Gaby points to syllables))

 5 Vic  [dra dre dri dro dru

 6 Mer  [dras dres dris dros drus

 7 Gab    mhm
          mhm

 8 Vic  [dra dre dri dro dru

 9 Mer  [dras dres dris dros drus

10 Gab    DRUS:

12 Vic    drush:

13 Gab    aja DRUSS:
          uh-huh, DRUSS:

14 Vic    drush. sí?
          drush. yes?
```

```
15 Gab   el so- el: sonante de la: letra  ese  cuál  es.
          the    the sound  of the letter this which it-is
          the so- the sound of this letter what is it.

16 Vic   sh

17 Gab   ss[s:

18 Vic      [sh

19 Gab   no  es sh  as[í
          not it-is     like-that
          it's not sh like that

20 Gab   w- m- me estaba   poniendo la  c y   la y   la h
              me you-were putting  the c and the and the h
          you were putting the c and the h

21 Vic   [sh

22 Vic   sh

23 Gab   es    ss[s:
          it-is
          it's ss[s:

24 Vic        [sh

25 Gab   nnno, es    la   sss:
          no    it-is the "sss"
          no, ((shaking head)) it's sss:
```

As the teacher points to each syllable written on the board, the students pronounce it together. As indicated in the transcript, Victor is having some difficulty pronouncing the syllable. At one point, he is pronouncing the syllables without the final "s" (Lines 1, 4, 5, and 8), then adding a "sh" sound instead of the final "s" (Line 12 and thereafter). Here, the teacher makes use of embodied action by pointing visibly to the syllable on the white board that students are meant to pronounce.

Gaby first orients to Victor's pronunciation as a trouble source in Line 3, when she loudly and exaggeratedly repeats the syllable "dras" after Victor's incorrect pronunciation, to be followed by additional attempts at correction. During the pronunciation practice indicated in lines 8 and 9 of the transcript above, the teacher makes use of embodied resources to enact publicly her stance toward Victor's pronunciation.

Victor: dri

Teacher gazes upward

Enacting listening

Victor: dro

Teacher's gaze moves downward, eyebrows furrow

Trouble source identified and made visible

Victor: dru

Teacher's upper body leans in slightly, head tilts to opposite side

Problematic utterance made more visible

Teacher: DRUS

Teacher utters the syllable, emphasizing on the final 'ss' sound

Correction uttered

Figure 5.2: Teacher Gaby's embodied repair initiation and correction.

Figure 2 above demonstrates the embodied way this process unfolds, from identification of the trouble to utterance of the repair. In the figure, the arrows on each picture indicate the direction of Gaby's gaze as the syllable is uttered.

While pointing to the syllable "dris" to elicit students' pronunciation, the teacher enacts listening by gazing upward and away from the students (toward the back wall of the room). During the students' pronunciation of the next syllable, "dros," she shifts her eye gaze downward and toward the students, with a furrow of her brow. During pronunciation of the final syllable in the series, "drus," the teacher recruits additional bodily resources by tilting her chin and upper body toward the students, keeping her gaze on them.

The shifting eye gaze, furrowed brow, and changes in body posture allow the teacher to make public her treatment of Victor's pronunciation as problematic, and therefore to preface the initiation of repair. With the gradual unfolding of the public identification of trouble, Victor has an opportunity to self-repair, in line with the general preference for self-correction in interaction (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). He continues to mispronounce the syllable, however, which leads the instructor to produce the correction herself (Line 10).

As the interaction progresses, Gaby refers more explicitly to Victor's mispronunciation. She tries a different approach by asking him what the sound of the letter "S" is (Line 15), to which he again produces the "sh" sound. In Lines 19-25, she continues to attempt to correct Victor's pronunciation, alternating between negating his pronunciation (Lines 19-20), restating the repair (Line 23), and finally, in Line 25, putting the negation and the correction together with a shake of her head: "No, it's sss."

This interaction illustrates the unfolding of a correction sequence. The instructor began with a straightforward correction in Line 3, followed by an embodied identification of trouble.

When there was no other-correction, Gaby tried various approaches to encourage the student to identify his error and correct it. The initial embodied repair initiation did publicly identify the error — it therefore would only successfully prompt the student to self-correct *if* he was aware of his error. The subsequent exchange suggests that he was not. Such a negotiation exemplifies the dynamic nature of epistemic stance and status. Gaby must constantly recalibrate her approach to correcting student errors based on their responses to her repair initiations.

Though certainly dynamic, the epistemic ecology never shifts such that the teacher is the K- position relative to the student; in this way, the interaction demonstrates an expected knowledge distribution for the classroom. That the teacher corrects the student's pronunciation reflects her relative K+ position and his K- position. (This student is actually quite proficient in Spanish, which is made clear in other portions of the interaction, when the teacher and student talk at length in Spanish. His status as a non-native speaker, however, is revealed through his mispronunciation of the syllables. This interaction shows how this literacy class is also a Spanish language class, even for students whose Spanish is at a relatively advanced level.)

Excerpt 1 also demonstrates how students are socialized into the language of the classroom, in this case the typical classroom practice of recitation prompted by an instructor's non-verbal signal. This practice requires a great deal of classroom-specific expertise, such as attending to the instructor, recognizing the utility of the white board and pointers, and the kind of prosody and volume expected in recitation sequences. That this sequence unfolds as it does (with students following along and responding appropriately to the instructor's repair initiation) demonstrates that students have this understanding of classroom practices, itself an important form of knowledge. In this way, this canonical classroom repair trajectory demonstrates that both student and teacher are oriented to the practices of the classroom and, perhaps more importantly

for the purposes of showing shared understanding, they both understand that *the other* is so

oriented as well.

5.3 Appeal to a common referent

A few moments later, the teacher calls upon a culturally bound reference to help the

student better understand the sound of the "s". Excerpt 2 below details this subsequent

explanation.

```
Excerpt 2: Doggy

1 Gab   o  como cuál  otro  que  otra  cosa: suena  como  sss:
        or like which other what other thing sounds like  sss
        or like which other what other thing sounds like  sss:

2       sería        también ss ss ss
        it-would-be also
        it would be also    ss ss ss

3       por ejemplo cuando lla- cuando cuando llamamos a un perrito,
        for example when        when   when   we-call  to a dog-small
        for example when call- when when we call a doggy,

4       (no  sé). (.)    que  le decimos  ss- ss- s- ss-
         not I-know      that it we-say
        (I don't know). (.) that we would say to it ss- ss- s ss-
```

In Mexico, as in some other Latin American countries, the sound people use to get the

attention of a dog is a sort of staccato hissing sound, as opposed to the dental click sound more

frequently used in the U.S. Gaby's reference to the sound made when calling a dog is specific to

Latin American culture and can only function as an aid to understanding the "s" sound if her

listener understands that cultural reference. This reference, therefore, relies on knowledge of a

shared cultural background. Her assumption about this shared cultural understanding is made

explicit with her use of the third-person plural subject pronoun in Lines 3 and 4 ("when **we** call a

doggy"/"**we** would say to it"). This inclusive "we" brings to light the presumption that both

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teacher and student have the same cultural practices. Gaby's use of the diminutive -*ito* at the end

of *perrito* ("doggy") in Line 3 further mitigates the face-threatening potential of her correction,

as diminutives in Mexican Spanish are understood to mark intimacy and politeness.

This interaction thus reveals both an epistemic imbalance, in terms of the pronunciation

of the "ss" sound, and an epistemic parity, in terms of cultural knowledge. Error management

and repair in this classroom, along with other interactional achievements must frequently

navigate epistemic imbalance as well as symmetry. Interestingly, Gaby's appeal to a common

referent (the dog-calling sound) allows her to pursue her repair of Victor's problematic

pronunciation while still appealing to their shared cultural understanding. She further mitigates

her correction by adding the diminutive ending to *perrito* ("doggy"). In this sense, she is able to

assert her K+ position as regards the topic of her lesson, while publicly granting the level

epistemic playing field in terms of cultural knowledge.

Figure 5.3: Gaby explains the "ss" sound to Victor using the dog-calling sound example.

5.4 Summoning teacher evaluation

Another repair sequence, presented in Excerpt 3 below, comes from a lesson on the syllable "dra". The teacher has instructed students to write the word *piedra* ("stone") in their notebooks. Gaby then moves away from the white board in the front of the classroom to monitor two female students, Ramona and Mercedes, sitting toward the back of the room. The excerpt begins as Ramona asks Gaby "Like this?" with a glance upward to view her reaction (see Figure 4).

Figure 5.4: From left, students Ramona and Mercedes and teacher Gaby discuss the lesson.

```
Excerpt 3: What is the letter

1 Ram   así?
        like-this?
        like this?

2 Gab   pie-,
        pie-
```

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```
 3 Gab    pero cuál  e   la  letra  que  estamos viendo el   día de hoy.
          but   which is  the letter that we-are  seeing the day of today
          but  what is the letter that we're looking at today.

 4 Ram    °dra°
          °dra° ((final syllable of piedra))

 5 Mer    entonce falta          la   a   aquí
          then    it—lacks        the  a   here
          so it's missing the a here

 6 Ram    [(y    la
             and the
          [(and the

 7 Gab    [mm hm,
          [mm hm, ((to Mercedes))

 8 Gab    mande?
          what
          what? ((turning back to Ramona))

 9 Ram    la   di
          the
          the dee

10 Gab    la   d, exactamente
          the d exactly
          the d, exactly
```

In this excerpt, the instructor uses a known-answer question in Line 3 to elicit the

"correct" response from Ramona (i.e., to initiate repair), who is struggling somewhat to spell the

word *piedra* ("stone"). Ramona asks a status check question ("like this?") in Line 1, with upward

intonation and a gaze at Gaby to elicit evaluation. Gaby looks at Ramona's notebook and

pronounces what she has written. Her upward intonation at the end of Line 2 indicates that she

sequence requires expansion. Similarly, her turn-initial *pero* ("but") in Line 3 indexes an

impending opposition to the question, or at the very least a departure from the expected response

to her question (Heritage, 2013). This departure takes the form of an insertion sequence, the first

part of which is a known-answer question ("What is the letter that we're looking at today?").

Gaby, in other words, knows the answer to the question she has asked, and the fact that she is

asking Ramona indicates she believes Ramona knows as well. In eliciting Ramona's response to

the question immediately after Ramona's request for an evaluation, Gaby is tying the relevance of the question's expected response to Ramona's work.

In the meantime, Mercedes, who is sitting next to Ramona, makes a verbal display of realizing that her word is "missing the *a*" (Line 5), an announcement that receives validation from Gaby in Line 7 ("mm hm"). Mercedes' pronouncement of her error enables Gaby's validation of this realization, which would not have been possible had Mercedes corrected her work silently. Mercedes is here engaging with the participation framework of the classroom, in which students elicit teacher inspection of their work, and then receive some sort of validation or correction. That Gaby responds with a quick "mm hm" validates not only Mercedes' work on her lesson but also her competency as a student within this framework.

Following this exchange, Mercedes reaches for the eraser to correct her spelling error, and Gaby turns back to Ramona, who responds to Gaby's question about the letter of the day. Interestingly, Ramona's *d* in Line 9 is pronounced like the English letter *d* [di] and not like the Spanish letter *d* [de]. (Gaby, however, proceeds with a confirmation of this response ("the *d*, exactly"), herself using the common Spanish pronunciation of the letter. In doing so, she recognizes Ramona's response as correct while at the same time reformulating that response so it is pronounced according the conventions of the Spanish alphabet. Here we see the importance of something as seemingly elemental — but actually quite arbitrary — as the pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet. Gaby does not correct Ramona's pronunciation, however; she instead restates Ramona's response using the conventionally correct pronunciation, and even upgrades her stance toward Ramona's response with "exactly."

Gaby's confirmation of Ramona's response in Line 10 achieves two seemingly divergent things at once — it recognizes Ramona's answer as correct while repairing her pronunciation of

that answer. This interaction therefore has both "exposed" and "embedded" correction (Jefferson, 1987). The interactional business of Gaby and Ramona's talk was to check Ramona's spelling, which rendered Gaby's correction of Ramona's spelling inevitably exposed. However, Gaby's correction of Ramona's pronunciation of the letter *d* was embedded in that sequence, which prevented any uptake and thus possible departure from the spelling correction sequence. In other words, the embedded correction of Ramona's pronunciation allowed Gaby to achieve the repair while persisting with the exposed correction of Ramona's spelling. Ramona's spelling, as the interactional business of the sequence, was eligible for public critique, but her pronunciation was not. Gaby could certainly have deviated from the spelling correction sequence to provide an exposed correction for Ramona's pronunciation as well; however, this departure from the spelling sequence would have had meaningful pedagogical and interactional consequences. For one, it would have drawn attention away from the lesson's focus on spelling. Interactionally, it also might have run the risk of discouraging Ramona, a student who was already having some trouble with the lesson. The embeddedness of Gaby's pronunciation correction, then, can be viewed as an affiliative move — it allowed her to address the trouble while not exposing it as an error per se, thereby not requiring it to be treated as an error in subsequent talk.

Excerpt 3 shows how repair can function to interactively socialize students into classroom behavior such as responding to known-answer questions, inviting teacher validation, and alphabet knowledge. This socialization is made possible through attending to the knowledge states of others. Students and teacher display various epistemic stances toward the material: Ramona, for her part, displays her uncertainty by eliciting Gaby's evaluation of her work; Mercedes displays a change in her knowledge state by verbally identifying her own error; and

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Gaby displays her epistemic authority by evaluating responses.

Gaby's known-answer question does not convey a lack of knowledge; on the contrary, it demonstrates her epistemic authority. In non-classroom interactions, however, known-answer questions are rare. Students with little former classroom experience are therefore unlikely to have encountered this questioning style. That these literacy students treat Gaby's known-answer question as a pedagogical tool and not as an indication that she lacks the knowledge in question indicated that they have already been socialized into the classroom practice of known-answer questions.

This interaction reveals how socialization into postindustrial classroom practices is done, even in an informal setting and with nontraditional students. Adults who have had little exposure to formal education arrive at literacy classes without having been socialized into the kinds of practices typical in U.S. classrooms. Excerpt 3 therefore demonstrates how adults with little formal education experience are socialized into classroom practices through interactional practices such as epistemic stance displays.

5.5 Laughter as response to repair initiation

For their part, students sometimes respond to instructors' repair initiation and pursuit with laughter. Although this laughter may not serve to build cultural solidarity per se, it certainly has a social and affiliative function. As the interaction detailed in Excerpt 4 will demonstrate, laughter can do other kinds of interactional work as well. At the start of Excerpt 4, the day's instructor, Isa, is going over a worksheet with Amalia. The worksheet featured a series of pictures of objects with a space under each object where students were expected to write each object's name. The instructor points to two pictures on Amalia's worksheet, first a comb and

then a box, and prompts her to say the object's name in each case. In the transcript below,

Amalia's name is abbreviated to Ama.

```
Excerpt 4: Box

 1 Isa      y   este? ((pointing to picture of comb on worksheet))
            and this-one
            and this one?

 2 Ama      °pei:°
            °co:°

 3 Isa      pei:::ne. peine.
            comb      comb
            co:::mb. comb.

 4 Ama      pei:ne.
            comb
            co:mb.

((Isa moves to point at the next picture, a box))

 5 Isa      y este?
            and this-one
            and this one?

 6 Ama      peine.
            comb
            comb.

 7 Isa      no. CAja.
            no  box
            no. BOx.

((Amalia smiles, looks away from Isa, brings right hand to face))

 8 Isa      caa::=
            bo::=

 9 Ama      =hehe

10 Isa      CAja. ((smiling voice))
            box
            BOx.
```

Figure 5.4: Student Amalia, right, laughs and looks away after receiving correction from instructor Isa.

After reviewing the label "comb" with Amalia, Isa then moves to the picture of the box, for which Amalia also gives the answer "comb." Isa's response to this incorrect label is a straightforward "no" followed by the correct response. This sequence of course already deviates in several ways from non-institutional interactions, first in the presence of the known-answer question discussed earlier, as well as in the abrupt other-correction that is avoided in ordinary conversations (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Here, because pedagogy is the explicit

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business of the interaction, this dispreference for other-correction is lifted to some extent. Immediately following Isa's response, Amalia smiles, then looks to her right and brings her right hand close to her face. She then produces a small series of quiet laugh tokens. The sequential placement of the laughter — after Amalia gives a response that is not only incorrect but is actually the answer to the previous question, which they had just reviewed — suggests that Amalia is aware of the folly and therefore humor of her "comb" response, especially given the previous sequence. Amalia's small movement of her head away from Isa and the worksheet further suggest some level of embarrassment at her answer. The right hand to the face, in an almost literally face-saving move, which also supports this interpretation. Amalia's laughter, then, may be a way of indicating that she realizes that she has made a mistake — and a silly one at that.

Amalia's laughter is not immediately matched by laughter from Isa. This asymmetrical laughing pattern reflects the institutional nature of the interaction. To draw from conversation analysis research on a different institution, Haakana (2002) found that patients do most of the laughing in doctor-patient encounters, and that patients tended to use laughter when discussing something that may be viewed as a personal failing or something of questionable propriety (see also Jefferson, 1985); however, in those situations, doctors did not tend to laugh along with them. At first blush, this lack of uptake could be viewed as unsuccessful on the part of the patient, but it still serves a social function. It reveals that the patient understands that his interlocutor would view this as a transgression — evidence of an understanding of the beliefs of others.

Haakana extrapolated these findings to institutions in general, arguing that in encounters between a representative of the institution and a layperson, the latter will produce more laughter.

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This asymmetry appears to manifest itself in the adult literacy classroom as well. In this case, the instructor is the institutional representative. This apparent laughter asymmetry in the classroom is not as stark as in doctor-patient interactions, however; on other occasions, instructors laughed more than students. In the case of Amalia's laughter, Isa can be heard to laugh — if very quietly — only after Isa's initial laughter. Isa's laughter has been treated, then, as an invitation to join in the laughter at her expense. Instructors rarely if ever laugh at students' mistakes, but when invited to, as in this case, may join in. The instructor's laughter in these scenarios, however, will tend to be shorter-lived than the student's, as in Excerpt 4. The brief and quiet nature of Isa's laughter suggest that Amalia's error is "equivocal as to its laughability" (Jefferson, 1979; p. 83). Indeed, because the "laughable" in this case is in fact Amalia's mistake, Isa faces a challenge here: Is laughing with Amalia affiliative or derisive? Isa hedges her bets by laughing along, albeit quietly and briefly.

That laughter in the adult literacy classroom is somewhat asymmetrical but not as much as in doctor-patient interactions is understandable, given the tension between institutional authority and cultural solidarity. As mentioned earlier, the instructors are immigrants themselves, most of them even from the same region of Mexico and with the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds as their adult students. This shared cultural background levels the epistemic gradient somewhat, such that instructors may present themselves as authorities on literacy or classroom practices, but not in terms of actual power, unlike most doctor-patient interactions or, indeed, most typical classroom interactions.

5.6 Student-initiated repair

The previous examples demonstrated the more typical knowledge distribution, with the

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instructor in the K+ position relative to the student. Sometimes, however, the student herself is sometimes in the K+ position in a particular knowledge domain. Such an epistemic gradient makes for a more complicated epistemic ecology that teacher and student must navigate. In Excerpt 5 below, from the classroom on a different day, a volunteer assistant (Ariadna) is working with Rodolfo, a relatively beginning student. On this day, the class is engaged in more independent work, with students working on their own, in small groups, or with assistants. The day's main instructor, Oscar, is milling about the classroom helping various students at the beginning of the interaction; he will make an appearance at the end of the excerpt.

The activity Ariadna and Rodolfo are engaged in is going over the day's lesson on the letter *x* in Mexican Spanish, which is notoriously inconsistent in its pronunciation (unlike most of the rest of the letters used in Spanish, which has in general a highly phonemic orthography). For example, the name *México* is pronounced in Spanish as *Mejico* [mexico/mejico] whereas in names of indigenous origin (e.g., *Xochimilco*, *Xochitl*), the *x* is pronounced as a "sh" [ʃ]. Further, when *x* is preceded by a word-initial vowel, it is typically pronounced closer to "ks" or "gs," as in *exactamente* or *extra*.

Rodolfo is having a difficult time with this inconsistency, displaying his frustration by shaking his head, sighing, and pausing frequently. At one point, he turns to another student, Marta, who is engaged in another activity with another instructor, and says something to her in their native language, Mixtec. The transcript below documents the subsequent exchange.

```
1 Mar   um, (.) dice    que  lo que  le  está    explicando
              he-says that it that him you-are explaining
         um, (.) he says that what you are explaining to him

2        casi  no  le  está  entiendo     mucho ((to Ariadna))
         almost not you he-is understanding much
         almost he's not understanding you much

3 Ari    (.) °bueno es    que: con hh [con  esta letra,
             well  it-is that with    with this letter
         (.) °well it's that: with hh [with this letter,

4 Mar                              [es    que-
                                    it-is that
                                   [it's that-

5 Ari    se   pronuncia:, (.) e- [e- s- sí,
         self it-pronounces         yes
         it's pronounced:, (.) u- [u- y- yes,

6 Osc                             [diferente.
                                   different
                                  [differently.

7 Ari    diferen[te.
         different
         differently.
```

In this excerpt, Marta, whose Spanish is a bit more advanced than Rodolfo's, acts as interpreter for Rodolfo. In Line 1, Marta turns to the classroom volunteer (Ariadna) to relay her interpretation of what Rodolfo has just told her. This reformulation is hedged to defer to Ariadna's supposed position of authority — the initial pause, audible inhalation and "um"-prefacing, suggest that the turn Marta is about to produce is problematic or "dispreferred" (Schegloff, 2010). Such turn-initial features also signal Marta's "reluctancy or discomfort" (Pomerantz 1984; p. 72), which is consistent with Marta's status as a student and Ariadna's status as a (quasi)-instructor. Marta's utterance is further mitigated through the use of *casi*, ("almost"), and *mucho* ("much").

Still, Marta manages through this (albeit deferent) utterance to assert her own epistemic authority over the Mixtec language, while simultaneously demonstrating her knowledge of

Spanish, using this K+ position relative to Ariadna to help another student. Marta is thus able to affiliate primarily with Rodolfo but also to an extent with Ariadna, through deferring to Ariadna's authority in the classroom setting (see Raymond, 2014, for a discussion of epistemic brokering in interpreter-mediated doctor-patient interactions).

For Rodolfo's part, his recruitment of Marta's help in the first place reflects his own presupposition that Marta will not only understand his utterance in Mixtec, but that she will be able and willing to reformulate it in Spanish for the instructor. Further, this recruitment of a former non-participant asserts his rights to ratify a new participant. This affiliation between Rodolfo and Marta, emerging through Rodolfo's recruitment of Marta and then through Marta's reformulation of his initial utterance, makes explicit the common native language of both Marta and Rodolfo, and by contrast Ariadna's lack of knowledge of Mixtec.

Ariadna responds in Line 3 to Marta's utterance with another turn-initial signal of dispreference: *bueno*, or "well", again indicating some upcoming trouble (Raymond, forthcoming). This trouble, in contrast with that of Marta's previous utterance, is more probably related to Ariadna's uncertainty about how to respond than to some foreseeable epistemic imbalance. This analysis is supported by Ariadna's brief laugh token within the turn, which may serve a mitigating or face-saving purpose. After a brief abandoned overlapping utterance from Marta in Line 4, Ariadna continues in Line 5 to display trouble in formulating her response, as indicated by a pause and multiple restarts. She is saved by Oscar's overlapping *diferente* ("differently") in Line 6, which is oriented to by Ariadna as the solution to her word search, as is evident in her subsequent repetition of the word (Line 7). This resolution offered initially by Oscar and confirmed by Ariadna, effectively closes the sequence. Oscar, a native speaker of Mixtec who is also proficient in Spanish and also has more epistemic authority over the teaching

materials, is indisputably the authority on both languages as well as the lesson at hand, and further is the administrative manager of the classroom and its activities. His intervention in the interaction, then, serves not only to offer a candidate solution to Ariadna's word search and effectively rescue her from her trouble in producing her response, but also to justify Rodolfo's initial difficulty with the material. The reason, then, for this trouble in the first place, is accounted for interactively, through Ariadna's effortful beginning of an explanation and Oscar's completion of it. With just one word, Oscar has used his authority in several domains to affiliate with all parties: with Rodolfo and Ariadna, by validating the difficulty in learning and teaching this topic, respectively, and with Marta, by justifying her own intervention in another student's learning, which might otherwise be viewed as encroaching. This latter portion of the interaction constitutes a shift in the kind of affiliation being done: from the students' affiliation with each other as speakers of Mixtec who are learning Spanish, to the whole group's affiliation with one another as people orienting to a difficult lesson. Put another way, it shows how a local community of practice — in this case, the classroom community — can be constituted through real-time interaction.

This sequence certainly features a negotiation of understanding, which would classify it as a repair sequence — though the kind of repair initiation is an unusual one. The utterance that is oriented to as a repair initiation is Marta's, even though she formulates this utterance on behalf of someone else. The repair is other-initiated, though the "other" in this case is not the original recipient, Rodolfo, but another student, Marta. Moreover, the response is done collaboratively, with both Ariadna and Oscar contributing to the explanation. The entire sequence, then, from initiation to explanation, is done with the original dyad plus two spontaneously recruited participants. This dynamic participation framework is possible because of the varying levels of

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epistemic access each participant has to the relevant domains of knowledge.

Through Marta's mitigated display of her epistemic status regarding Mixtec and Spanish in the previous interaction, she builds affiliation with Rodolfo by indicating her understanding of his trouble. A group affiliation with the immediately present interlocutors is also created, through an interactively constituted validation of the lesson's difficulty. This analysis has demonstrated that in this complex epistemic ecology of the Spanish-language literacy classroom, wherein students have varying degrees of proficiency with both Spanish and Mixtec, the teacher is an authority on both as well as the teaching materials, and the classroom volunteers frequently know limited Spanish and even less Mixtec.

5.7 Conclusions and implications for learning

This chapter has focused on the role of repair and reformulation in this complex process of navigating epistemic imbalances while at the same time displaying social affiliation. In this classroom setting, repair appears in different ways than in regular conversation. For one, other-initiated repair on the part of the instructor is frequent. At the same time, repair of the instructor's talk is rarely if ever initiated by the student; however, students may initiate a reformulation, though with different strategies than those used by instructors. The repair patterns of the adult literacy classroom show that the epistemic asymmetry of classroom interactions generally holds in this setting, but that cultural solidarity among students and instructors serves to level the epistemic gradient somewhat.

Repair as a means of navigating epistemic imbalances is particularly relevant in the classroom, a place that exists explicitly for knowledge acquisition. However, along with that acquisition of knowledge are complex socialization practices that enable individuals to become

competent members of the classroom. This socialization is complicated in the literacy classroom analyzed here by the students' cultural background. Indeed, the stated purpose of the center at which the literacy classes are held is to provide support and advocacy for Mixtec speakers in California. In this purpose, it differs from other, more typical classroom settings. Students are there to learn to read and write, certainly, but they are also there because of an interest in maintaining the Mixtec culture.

Because of this cultural orientation of the literacy classes, students' cultural affiliation is extremely salient. The linguistic and cultural background of these students reverberates through the repair trajectories discussed here in various ways. In Excerpts 1 through 4, Victor's problematic pronunciation, Ramona's difficulties with spelling and the alphabet, and Amalia's incorrect response to the instructor's question are direct results of their status as non-native speakers of Spanish, as well as their lack of experience with reading. These are, in turn, inextricably tied to their indigenous background. In Excerpt 5, Rodolfo's trouble with the lesson on the letter *x* can also be attributed to his lack of formal education due to his indigenous background, but in this case this background is made more explicit as he uses Mixtec to communicate his difficulty. Here, the Mixtec language is used as a resource to manage misunderstanding; further, it serves as a tool for asserting epistemic domain over a supposed classroom authority. In this sense, Rodolfo's Mixtec background is exploited as a resource for managing a breach in understanding.

Like any real-life human phenomena, the socialization that goes on in this classroom is multi-faceted and complex. Students are being socialized into Spanish-language use and literacy, certainly, but they are also being socialized into the classroom practices that were largely inaccessible to them as children. Finally, through participation in a literacy class designed

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especially for them by an advocacy group, they are socialized into an identity as an indigenous migrant.

In classroom discourse, interactional trouble takes a unique position because of the classroom's purported purpose as a space for knowledge acquisition and correction *explicitly*. As the interactions detailed in this chapter have shown, however, repair does not always treat simple errors — it is also deployed to address teachers' problematic explanations. The organization of the interaction post-repair is perhaps even more illuminating. Repair can lead to correction, yes, but also laughter (as in Excerpt 4), account-giving (as in Excerpt 5), and an appeal to a commonly understood referent (as in Excerpt 2). Repair, then, demonstrates the highly sensitive and dynamic nature of interaction — its deployment and subsequent sequences are carefully attuned to the prior talk as well as the relationships between interlocutors.

In this classroom setting, even the repair sequence, which is arguably a potential locus for disaffiliation in interaction, allows for social affiliation. This affiliation has important implications for these students' learning trajectory. Affiliation has been described as an important aspect of interpersonal motivation, which in turn plays an important role in second language acquisition (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, Noels, 1998). The literature on motivation in SLA is highly focused on the individual, however, while this investigation locates affiliation in the interactional space. (It also relies heavily on university students and otherwise educated adults who are learning a foreign language or learning English in the U.S., populations that have a very different set of demands, attitudes, and challenges.) I argue not that social affiliation is a motive for learning (though it may well be), but rather that it is these sequences of talk that achieve social affiliation. Regardless of whether social affiliation is viewed as a source of motivation or as an interactional achievement, it is certainly relevant to the SLA classroom. In

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this particular classroom, the maintenance of social affiliation — made possible partly because of the participants' shared cultural background — allows students to ask questions, respond, and even initiate repair more confidently. As a resource for navigating the epistemic ecology of the classroom, repair sequences can contribute to the social affiliation that in turn fosters a more hospitable environment for learning.

More broadly, as a mechanism for dealing with problems in understanding, repair can elucidate the underlying intersubjectivity that organizes social interaction — the "primal experience of the we-relationship" (Schutz, 1966; p. 82). Certainly, any turn at talk that orients to a prior turn demonstrates a mutual understanding to some degree; the organization of repair, however, is a way of dealing with breakdowns in this understanding. Repair has therefore been said by some conversation analysts to serve to "defend" or "re-establish" intersubjectivity in conversation (Schegloff, 1992; Gardner & Wagner, 2004).

In the case of the literacy classroom under investigation here, such sequences reveal much more than just a defense of the kind of general shared understanding that is a necessary condition for any conversation to take place; they also elucidate the students' and instructors' affiliation to their shared cultural heritage.

CHAPTER 6

Assessment and its role in displaying empathy and building group solidarity

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed repair as a mechanism for dealing with problems of

hearing or understanding in classroom interactions, and how this interactional resource is

relevant in managing epistemic imbalances. But what of situations in which a listener displays

that she *has* heard or understood? Interactional elements that do the work of displaying

understanding can range from simple change-of-state tokens (e.g., "oh") (Heritage, 1984) to full

assessments. Whereas change-of-state tokens do little affiliative work aside from demonstrating

interest in an interlocutor's talk, a more detailed and affiliative response can be achieved with an

assessment. The stance-taking nature of an assessment reveals not only continuing interest but

also a relationship to and an understanding of the topic (Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin,

1992). When they demonstrate an understanding of another person's experience, assessments can

have a perspective-displaying function (Maynard, 1989). This affiliative potential allows

assessments to empathize with the original speaker. The evaluation of another individual's

experience is a risky endeavor, since it encroaches on another's person's subjectivity (Heritage,

2011). If successful, however, these kinds of assessments can help to interactively build "co-

experience" (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; p. 155).

This chapter will first discuss assessments deployed by the instructor, typical classroom

sequences that offer a venue for public evaluation of student activity. Analysis will then turn to

examples of assessments made by students, which can invite second assessments that result in a

multi-party interaction that, in turn, builds group affiliation. After analysis of these sequences, implications for learning will be discussed.

6.2 Instructor-produced assessments

In the classroom, assessments are frequently used to publicly evaluate student proficiency or to judge the accuracy of a response. A prominent context for assessments in the classroom is the ubiquitous Initiation-Response-Evaluation sequence, an example of turn design being put to use as an instructional tool. Mehan (1979) illustrated the difference between question-answer sequences in regular conversation and the same sequences in classroom interaction with the following two examples:

```
Example 1
 1 Speaker A:  What time is it, Denise?
 2 Speaker B:  2:30
 3 Speaker A:  Thank you, Denise

Example 2
 1 Speaker A:  What time is it, Denise?
 2 Speaker B:  2:30
 3 Speaker A:  Very good, Denise
```

Example 1 is what one might expect in a non-institutional conversation, while the second is more typical of classroom interaction, with its question, response, and assessment sequencing. In Example 1, the third-position utterance in Line 3 is an acknowledgment, indicating a change of knowledge state. In other words, speaker A indicates that he has received and absorbed the information speaker B has offered, and that this information was in fact an appropriate response to the initial question. Crucially, in Example 2, the third-position utterance operates as an assessment that reveals the initiating question as not an information-seeking question but rather a test of student knowledge.

As noted in the previous chapter on repair, competent participation in the classroom depends on socialization into the norms of classroom interaction. The adult students are novices not only in reading and writing, but also in classroom behavior — the IRE sequence is an example of one such behavior. The IRE sequence tests not only student knowledge about the topic at hand, but also student socialization into the norms of the classroom, one of which is participation in the IRE sequence itself. Because these students have had limited experience in formal classrooms, their socialization into studenthood is occurring later than for adults who grew up in the U.S., where more than 75% of people graduate on time from high school as opposed to Mexico's 45% (Rama, 2011).

6.2.1 Assessment as part of an IRE sequence

For a look at an IRE sequence in the dataset, we return to an excerpt introduced in the previous chapter. To review, the instructor, Gaby, is helping students Ramona and Mercedes, who are working individually. Because the IRE sequence here is punctuated by an insertion sequence, the relevant elements have been indicated with an arrow.

```
Excerpt 1: What is the letter

 1 Ram   así?
         like-this?
         like this?

 2 Gab   pie-,
         pie-

 3 Gab ➔pero cuál  e  la  letra  que  estamos viendo el  día de hoy.
         but  which is the letter that we-are  seeing the day of today
         but what is the letter that we're looking at today.

 4 Ram   °dra°
         °dra° ((final syllable of piedra))
```

```
 5 Mer    entonce falta         la   a  aquí
          then    it—is-missing the  a  here
          so it's missing the a here

 6 Ram    [(y   la
            and the
          [(and the

 7 Gab    [mm hm,
          [mm hm, ((to Mercedes))

 8 Gab    mande?
          what
          what? ((turning back to Ramona))

 9 Ram  ➔la  di
          the di
          the dee

10 Gab  ➔la  d, exactamente.
          the d exactly
          the d, exactly.
```

Gaby's initiating question in Line 3 is a known-answer question: She, as the teacher, knows perfectly well what the letter is that they are looking at that day. Although Ramona does give an initial candidate answer to Gaby's question in Line 4, it is either not heard or not attended to. Ramona's eventual response in Line 9 is the one that is oriented to as the response *to be evaluated*. Although Ramona's *d* in Line 9 is pronounced like the English letter *d* [di] and not like the Spanish letter *d* [de], Gaby evaluates Ramona's response as correct ("the *d*, exactly") — albeit with an embedded correction of the pronunciation — thereby closing the sequence. In doing so, she recognizes Ramona's response as correct while at the same time reformulating that response so it is pronounced according the conventions of the Spanish alphabet. Gaby's evaluation in Line 10 is affiliative in that it accepts Ramona's response as correct despite its problematic pronunciation. It displays empathy by demonstrating an understanding of what Ramona *meant to say*, even if she said it incorrectly. Still, by reformulating the response ("la *d*"), Gaby is able to slip in a correction without explicitly orienting to Ramona's response as

incorrect. Gaby's evaluation expertly affiliates with Ramona by displaying her understanding of Ramona's meaning while at the same time subtly repairing the response through embedded correction.

6.2.2 Embodied initiation of assessment sequences

At times, students initiate assessment sequences by presenting work to the instructor, who then evaluates that work. This student-initiated evaluation sequence is a type of communicative activity (Linell, 2010) that requires assessment for its completion. This practice is observed when the instructor has given students an exercise to complete silently and independently. Student initiation of these sequences tend to be minimally verbal; for example, a student may direct the instructor's attention to her work by physically handing the paper to the instructor or moving it into the instructor's line of sight.

In one example of this embodied pursuit of an assessment illustrated below with Figures 1 through 4 and the accompanying transcript (Excerpt 2), student Berta wordlessly hands instructor Isa a workbook after she has completed a task. While Berta waits, Isa examines the work briefly, then nods and provides her assessment of Berta's work: "ah bien" (Line 1). The sequence of pictures below illustrates the process of Berta's pursuit of teacher attention and assessment.

Figure 6.1: Student Berta (second from right) begins to extend workbook toward Isa (far left).

Figure 6.2: Berta continues to move workbook toward Isa, who looks up from table.

Figure 6.3: Isa reaches out to take Berta's workbook.

Figure 6.4: Isa provides her assessment of Berta's work while Berta looks on (see Excerpt 2).

As shown in Figure 1, at the start of this sequence Isa (far left) is engaged in another activity that has her attention focused on something in her hands on the table. When Berta begins to hand her workbook to Isa, however, the instructor's head lifts up to orient toward Berta and her workbook. Isa's next move is to extend her right arm across the table to take Berta's workbook, a move that involves Isa's whole upper body as her torso angles forward to be able to reach even farther. After taking the paper into her right hand, Isa brings it closer to her face for examination as she leans her torso back into her chair. Following a brief glance at the paper, she nods and evaluates Berta's work. The assessment sequence is transcribed in Excerpt 2 below.

```
Excerpt 2: Straighter now

1 Isa  ah bien ((nodding))=
       ah good
       ah good

2 Isa  no ve     que  sí  se puede?
       no see-you that yes it-can
       don't you see that you can (in fact)?

3 Ber  he[hehaha

4 Isa    [ya  más  derechito
          now more straight
          straighter now
```

Isa follows her initial straightforward assessment ("ah good") with a polar interrogative question that in fact references a previous conversation in which Berta asserted that she would not be able to complete the task that Isa had given her (see discussion of Excerpt 4 in this chapter). Isa's utterance in Line 2 is interactionally complex: By saying that Berta was indeed able to do the task, she praises Berta's ability, while at the same time discrediting Berta's earlier self-deprecating comment. Although in the latter sense Isa's utterance is technically a disagreement, it is still affiliative because it serves as praise of Berta's work.

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Berta does not respond to Isa's question in Line 2 with a yes or no, indicating that the question is oriented to by its recipient as an assertion rather than an interrogative despite its syntactic construction. It is its construction, in fact — particularly the beginning phrase "don't you see" — that reveals Isa's stance toward the matter of Berta's ability to achieve the task. This practice of using reversed polarity questions to *assert* rather than interrogate has been observed in news interviews (Heritage, 2002) as well as teacher-student interactions (Koshik, 2005). In both these settings, assertive questioning was shown to further the particular goals of those institutions. In this case, Isa's "declarative question" (Heritage, 2002) both assesses and encourages, one a pedagogical imperative and the other a pro-social one.

In response to this assessment, Berta laughs (Line 3). Previous research has discussed the role of laughter as a resource for resolving interactional trouble relating to face considerations (Holt, 2012; Glenn, 2003). Because Isa's utterance is a challenge to Berta's earlier claim about her inability to complete the task, it could be viewed as disaffiliative and face-threatening, even though the utterance also serves as confirmation of Berta's competence. Berta's laughter, then, may function to highlight the interactional trouble created by her initial challenge to Isa's authority.

Isa continues, in overlap with Berta's laughter, with a more detailed comment on Berta's work: "straighter now" (Line 4). This comment, which refers to Berta's ability to write in a straight line on the page, expands Isa's initial assessment in Line 1 to clearly identify the "assessable" in this case: Berta's handwriting.

Broadly, the assessment sequence above points to an interactional challenge in the classroom relating to stance and authority: Student responses to instructor assessments of their work — especially positive ones — can pose a challenge. In the case of positive assessment,

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student agreement with the teacher runs the risk of appearing arrogant, while disagreement could be viewed as disaffiliative or undermining teacher authority. Laughter, then, is a resource to manage the challenge inherent in responding to teacher evaluations.

Excerpts 1 and 2 above highlight the role of the body and physical space in classroom interactions. In a literacy classroom in particular, the physical materials — paper, pencil, white board — are indispensible to learning. Because the skills being learned are visual in nature, participants are constantly orienting to physical materials. The attention-getting strategy used by Berta in Excerpt 2 demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the roles of not only talk but also gesture, bodily position, and material objects in building action. Berta's presentation of her workbook to Isa and Isa's subsequent assessment cannot be fully understood without all of these components of the action.

The classroom's physical layout and bodily positions of the participants give way to a multiparty nature of interaction, which gives rise to competition (Cekaite, 2009). Students must compete for the instructor's attention when they are pursuing assessments. To cope with this competitive ecology, they have learned to use such attention-getting strategies such as the embodied initiation described above, reflecting students' socialization into competent participants. These attention-getting strategies require more than just observing and adopting proper classroom behavior, though; they reveal a student's understanding about what actions might attract the attention of the instructor. This summons strategy demonstrates how "multiple participants take each other's bodies into account as they build relevant action in concert with each other" (Goodwin, 2003; p. 19).

6.3 Student-produced assessment: Evaluating schoolwork

Excerpt 1 demonstrated how a typical IRE sequence can display empathy while doing pedagogical work. As discussed in the previous chapter, the IRE sequence is a practice that exists mainly in pedagogical settings and therefore must be learned by new students, at the same time they are acquiring the knowledge associated with literacy. The teacher-recruitment strategy observed in Excerpt 2 is another example of socialized classroom practice: By employing classroom materials and gesture, Berta was able to successfully summon the instructor's attention. As discussed in the previous chapter, competent participation in the literacy classroom requires socialization into these kinds of classroom practices, previously unknown to many of these adult students who have little formal education experience.

Other kinds of assessment sequences can serve as resources for social affiliation as well. When the interaction is focused less on academic knowledge acquisition and more on social projects such as resistance, encouragement, or justification, assessment sequences are longer and less formulaic, invite multi-party participation, and display greater empathy and social affiliation. One such non-pedagogical practice that occurs in this classroom is students assessing learning or studying as difficult. These student evaluations are frequently followed by second assessments that disagree with the initial *evaluation* but do not disaffiliate with the *evaluator*. These assessment sequences demonstrate how disagreement can in fact be a pro-social action.

Excerpt 3 features a student's assessment of studying. In this segment, a group of students have been working quietly on their own for several minutes when Ignacio leans back in his chair, puts his pencil down on the desk, and looks around the room briefly before leaning back in his chair.

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Figure 6.5: Ignacio puts his pencil down (left), looks to his left (center), and leans back in his chair.

Ignacio's movements serve as a preface to his next action, which is to stand and walk to the corner of the room where the instructor, Isa, is pouring herself a cup of water. As he stands, Ignacio utters an audible response cry (Line 1) that makes public his struggle with the work. The manner of Ignacio's walk furthers this public performance of difficulty. As shown in the picture sequence below, Ignacio enacts a lurching motion, as someone with a leg injury might walk. The response cry and the staggering motion co-occur, working together to make visible Ignacio's struggle.

Figure 6.6: Ignacio walks across the room with a lurching motion as he utters a response cry.

Interestingly for the subsequent exchange, Ignacio's public display is of a physical nature and not a mental one, even though his frustration at the moment is with the schoolwork and not any physical endeavor. Ignacio's display, then, makes relevant the *physical* toll of work.

The instructor, Isa, is pouring herself a cup of water from the pitcher as Ignacio approaches. Ignacio begins the exchange by commenting to her on the difficulty of studying, an account for his public display of a struggle.

```
Excerpt 3: Effort

1  Ign   #uy ((stands up from chair, walks to water pitcher where Isa is
             standing))

2        (2.0)

3  Ign   cuesta mucho estudiar
          it-costs much to-study
          it takes a lot of effort to study

4  Isa   sí? no. cuesta más trabajar
          yes no  it-costs more to-work
          yes? no. it takes more effort to work.

5        (0.3)

6        ((laughs))

7        cuesta más trabajar que estudiar, sí
          it-costs more to-work than to-study yes
          it takes more effort to work than to study, yes

8        los dolores, los madrugadas,
          the pains    the early-mornings
          the pain, the early mornings,

9  Ign   oh, sí.
          oh  yes
          oh, yes.
```

In the interaction above, the instructor disagrees with a student assessment of the difficulty of studying: "cuesta mucho estudiar" (Line 1), translated in this excerpt as "it takes a lot of effort to study". The Spanish expression *cuesta mucho* in fact literally translates to "it costs

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a lot" and can be used in this literal sense to describe the price of something; however, it is frequently used analogously to express some kind of difficulty or effort. In this instance, Ignacio's response cry and belabored movements suggest that the "cost" he mentions is actually the cost exacted on the body rather than the mind.

Ignacio's assessment about the difficulty of schoolwork invites agreement or disagreement from the recipient. Although the preferred next action would be agreement, Isa disagrees with Ignacio's assessment. Isa prefaces her disagreement in Line 2 with the clarification request "yes?", a strategy consistent with the tendency to delay the stated disagreement component of the turn (Pomerantz, 1984). Isa does not wait for Ignacio to respond to this request for clarification, suggesting that neither speaker nor recipient have treated Isa's "yes?" as an actual request for clarification. Rather, it appears to be a challenge preface, an analysis that is supported with what immediately follow: Isa's "no", which could be understood as a strong disagreement. However, the next component of her turn is not an explicit contradiction to Ignacio's assessment of the difficulty of study. Rather, it is an evaluation of the difficulty of another activity: working.

Through asserting the difficulty of working immediately following Ignacio's assessment of study, Isa presents a contrast between work and study, providing an indirect disagreement. She avoids full disagreement — the dispreferred action — by shifting the referent (Pomerantz, 1978; Maynard, 1998). Isa could have contrasted study with any number of activities; however, work is the other main activity that these students are likely to engage in on a daily basis. Indeed, most students in the literacy class work in the strawberry fields nearby during the day, then arrive at class in the evening. Also, as mentioned earlier, Ignacio's prior actions made relevant the *physical* toll that working can take on the body, despite the mental nature of the task at hand.

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In this way, Ignacio's prefacing actions might have directed the interaction toward a comparison between school and work.

Isa laughs in Line 4 after a 0.3-second pause, possibly to mitigate the potentially disaffiliative effects of disagreeing where agreement was preferred. She then repeats and expands her previous assessment to make the comparison between work and study more explicit. Again, Ignacio's initial assessment that "it takes a lot of effort to study" did not necessarily invite a parallel assessment of work, but Isa has treated it as a preface to a comparison of the two activities. Isa reinforces this repeated assessment in Line 5 with a "yes" and declarative intonation.

In Line 6, Isa expands on her argument by providing evidence for her assessment of work as difficult, by referencing "the pains, the early mornings". Such a description requires that Isa have knowledge of Ignacio's line of work and what sorts of challenges it involves. In turn, because of the grammatical construction of Isa's utterance, it is ambiguous whether she is describing work or school; understanding her utterance therefore requires the knowledge of what she must know about Ignacio's work.

Her utterance-final continuing intonation at the end of her description in Line 6 suggests there is more to that list of unfavorable characteristics of working life, though she does not continue. Ignacio voices agreement with Isa in Line 7 with a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984) paired with an affirmative response ("oh yes"). Ignacio's response validates Isa's evidence without explicitly rescinding his earlier assessment that schoolwork is difficult. In this way, Ignacio's utterance affiliates with Isa's justification without completely endorsing her comparison of school and work.

Excerpt 3 shows how even a dispreferred second assessment may reveal shared knowledge and thus facilitate social affiliation. Through Isa's disagreement with Ignacio's assessment, she reveals her knowledge of the specific duties of Ignacio's work and offers an appreciation of the difficulty of his job's demands. In demonstrating her understanding of the nature of Ignacio's work, Isa's assessment is an empathic response that signals to Ignacio that she recognizes the physical demands of agricultural work and therefore has an understanding of his experience.

6.3.1 Negotiating claims about work and school

In this instance, both teacher and student have experience with and therefore rights to know about the difficulty of both work and study. In other words, Ignacio and Isa's assessments in this sequence claim knowledge about the experiences of working and studying — knowledge that is derived from their participation in both activities. Of course, there are many versions of both activities — work may be industrial, administrative, creative, etc. Ignacio is a farmworker, one of the most physically punishing jobs in the U.S. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 19,700 work-related injuries or illnesses among crop production workers in 2011, and researchers have estimated that this number is wildly underreported — by as much as 74 percent (Leigh, Du, & McCurdy, 2014). Isa enumerates two of the major physical demands of agricultural work — physical pain and early hours — to make her case for the argument that working is more difficult than studying.

The contrast Isa presents alludes to the tradeoff between work and education so pervasive in the discourse about the working class and economic opportunity. A comparison between manual labor and studying requires an analogy between physical effort and mental exertion, both

of which can be challenging but in different ways. Despite the obvious differences between these two activities, they are here offered as alternatives to one another — a proposition that reflects societal beliefs about occupational prestige and upward mobility. Implicit in Isa's positive evaluation of studying is the premise that knowledge-based work is preferable to the kind of physically demanding manual labor that these students are engaged in. Indeed, the literacy classes exist in part to promote students' eligibility for employment in sectors other than the low-skilled manual labor for which they currently qualify.

Of course, negative attitudes toward low-skilled manual labor exist outside the classroom as well. In a study of the prestige of various occupations in the U.S. and Canada, farm laborers scored the lowest, second to janitors (MacKinnon & Langford, 1994). These attitudes are not acquired through participation in these occupations; rather, they are shaped through socialization. As MacKinnon and Langford note, "we learn as children, for example, that doctors are highly educated and well-paid, and go about their work in a professionally quiet fashion" (p. 221). It is also through socialization that we develop attitudes toward people of certain social classes, races, linguistic backgrounds, and nationalities — attitudes that are often entangled with our views about occupational prestige. In the U.S., farmworkers (especially migrant farmworkers) are overwhelmingly of Mexican origin. Attitudes toward these laborers, then, are influenced by attitudes toward Hispanic people more broadly — attitudes that have been tinged with xenophobia and racism.

Seth Holmes has noted the attitudes toward farm labor as compared to desk jobs on a farm in the northwest U.S., highlighting in particular the relationship between actual body position and worker status (2013). He observed that the employees with the highest status held desk jobs, those with the next highest status held supervisory roles that allowed them to stand

and walk, while the lowest-status positions were those that required bending over to pick crops. He further calls attention to the dual meaning of the word *position* to describe both an occupation and the orientation of the body. A third relevant meaning of the word is that of status, as in social position. Holmes connected body position as required by a given job on the farm, and imputed humanness: "The jobs at the bottom of the hierarchy that require bodies to kneel in the dirt or bend over in the bushes are the least respected. Like animals, these workers are seen 'on all fours' " (Holmes, 2013; pp. 174-175). Interestingly, the notion of *upward mobility* in this case has both a figurative and quite literal sense: Farm workers who move from picking jobs to supervisory or office jobs quite literally *move upward* — their bodies shift from hunched over and crouched down to standing or sitting upright.

These attitudes about occupational prestige within the farm are reflected in workers' stated aspirations: One farm laborer in Holmes' study said he hoped to one day "work with his mind instead of his body" (Holmes, 2013; p. 174). This aspiration to shift from manual to mental labor is echoed in Isa and Ignacio's conversation in Excerpt 3. The occupational hierarchy and the pervasiveness of the belief that manual labor is the least preferred kind of work allows Isa to disagree with Ignacio's initial assessment without disaffiliating with him. If it is generally understood that working with one's mind is preferable to working with one's body, then evaluating manual labor as more difficult than other kinds of work is non-controversial.

Although Isa's assessment is consistent with popular beliefs about the difficulty of manual labor, it nonetheless demonstrates an appreciation for it. As a teacher, she is currently engaged in knowledge-based work, while Ignacio works in the fields during the day. By evaluating Ignacio's work as more difficult than her own, she demonstrates humility and an admiration for the demands of manual labor. In this way, Isa's turn in Line 2 might also be

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interpreted as a self-deprecation or "self-praise avoidance" (Pomerantz, 1978). However, in advancing her argument that work is more difficult than studying — and presenting that argument as oppositional to Ignacio's original assessment — Isa risks encroaching on Ignacio's experience of these two activities, presenting the kind of "problem of experience" Heritage described in his discussion of territories of knowledge and experience (2011; p. 160). Though *she* may negatively evaluate the physical toll this kind of work takes, it is not inevitable that he does. Though she may have experience with the kind of work Ignacio does, he certainly has greater rights to know about *his own* work experience. Similarly, though she has experienced classwork before, she has not experienced it in the same way that Ignacio has. Ignacio has produced an evaluation that in other circumstances might have invited agreement to fulfill pro-social obligations to affiliate with another's assessment.

In the classroom, however, that evaluation is disputed. Isa's refusal to directly align with Ignacio's assessment reflects the larger institutional goal of the classroom: to teach literacy skills. Isa is not a casual interlocutor but a representative of the institution and therefore is invested in seeing these students succeed. Her assessment of work as more difficult than studying, then, also serves a motivational purpose: By evaluating study as less difficult than work, which these students already do every day, Isa is taking a stance that study is an activity that is in fact feasible. In this setting, the social obligation to align with the complaint of an interlocutor is overridden by the demands of the classroom and Isa's role in it. That she manages to affiliate with Ignacio nonetheless (through a recognition of the difficulties his job entails) demonstrates how sometimes-competing social and institutional obligations can be managed in interaction.

6.4 Student-produced assessment: Self-denigration

Student frustration can also be directed inwardly as opposed to outwardly as in Excerpt 3. In Excerpt 4, disagreement following an assessment acts as a resource to encourage a frustrated student. Prior to the interaction, the instructor has given a worksheet to a student, Berta, who protests that she won't be able to do the task. (This interaction occurs prior to the instructor assessment sequence in Excerpt 2.) As in Excerpt 3, here the instructor disagrees with the student's assessment regarding the difficulty of classroom work. In this example, however, the student is explicitly assessing her own ability rather than the general difficulty of the work. Berta's self-criticism is oriented to by the instructor and other students as something *to be disagreed with*.

```
Excerpt 4: I won't be able to

1  Isa    vamos    a  ver
           we-will to to-see
           let's see

2  Ber    no: yo no  voy  a poder. (0.2)
           no  I  not will to be-able
           no: I won't be able to.

3  Ign    sí [se puede
           yes one can
           yes you can

4  Isa       [sí.
              yes
              yes.

5  Mar    sí se puede.
           yes one can
           yes you can.

((Gazing at Berta, Ignacio pumps left fist several times. At the end of this
movement he moves his head downward and to the right.))

6  Isa    >sí se puede.<=
           yes one can
           yes you can
```

```
7          =lo de-  es    un ejercicio
            the of it-is an exercise
           the- it's an exercise.
```

After being handed a worksheet by the instructor, Berta objects with a "no" (Line 2)
followed by the assertion that she "won't be able to" do the task, with her gaze fixed on the piece
of paper that instructor Isa has just given her. Berta does take hold of the paper despite her
protest: Even as she utters "no" in Line 2, she reaches across the work table to take hold of the
paper that Isa is handing to her (see Figure 7). By the end of her utterance in Line 2, she is
holding the paper with both hands and looking at it, rather than her recipient (see Figure 8). This
utterance is followed by a brief pause (0.2 seconds), during which Berta keeps her gaze on the
paper.

Figure 6.7: Berta begins to object that she won't "be able to" do the work (start of Line 2).

Figure 6.8: Berta finishes saying she won't be able to (end of Line 2).

Berta's bodily position relative to the paper suggests that despite her protest, she is orienting to the task as something to be completed or at least attempted. By taking the paper at all, she has committed herself to at least a discussion about the activity. The pause in Line 2 is followed by a disagreement in Line 3 — another student, Ignacio, offers a second assessment that counters Berta's initial negative evaluation ("yes you can"). Isa also offers a disagreement ("yes") in Line 4, in overlap with Ignacio's assessment. Yet another student, Marta, repeats Ignacio's assessment in Line 5 ("yes you can"), which Isa then repeats in Line 6.

Berta's negative assessment of her ability in Line 2 makes relevant either agreement or disagreement on the part of her recipient. Notably, Berta's assessment is oriented to not only by her recipient, Isa, but also by other students. In fact, one student, Ignacio, offers a second assessment *before* the instructor does. These student assessments demonstrate that students in the

class are attuned to other students' struggles and understand negative self-assessment as something to be disagreed with, in a particularly powerful display of the intersubjectivity always undergirding these interactions. Indeed, in this case, we see a great deal more disagreement than in Excerpt 3, despite both instances featuring negative assessments by students. The crucial difference is that here, Berta is negatively assessing her own ability, rather than the work itself. In other words, the assessment in this case is self-deprecating. Typically, disagreement is a dispreferred responsive action to assessments. When an assessment is self-deprecating, however, participants orient to *disagreement* as the preferred response (Pomerantz, 1978; 1984). Indeed, in this case, although agreement with Berta's negative self-assessment would have endorsed her position, it would also have seconded Berta's negative opinion of herself and therefore contributed to her discouragement.

A collective understanding of this inverted preference organization allows for such vehement disagreement to take place without causing offense. Preference organization aside, Excerpt 4 demonstrates the tension between territories of knowledge and territories of experience described by Heritage (2011), in which an evaluation of another person's experience can undermine the experiencer's rights to that experience. In this case, the roles of each interlocutor put Berta's rights to know about her own experience at odds with instructor Isa's rights to know which tasks can be completed. In other words, Berta's insistence that she will not be able to do the task is derived from her own experience in the classroom, whereas Isa's insistence that Berta can complete the task is derived from her own knowledge about Berta's abilities and the difficulty of the task.

As the instructor, Isa has greater knowledge about the task and its difficulty. However, Berta presumably has greater knowledge about her own abilities, and is therefore the authority in

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that domain. The other students who also disagree with Berta's self-assessment face an even higher risk of infringing on the authority of both Isa and Berta — as students, they lack Isa's institutional authority to tell Berta what she can and cannot do (and what she must do in order to progress), while they also lack the authority that Berta has over her own experience.

The preference to disagree with negative self-assessment can be understood to be particularly strong in this case, then, to compel interlocutors to not only disagree but to do so in a way that risks infringing upon (1) another's rights to her own experience; (2) a recipient's right to respond first; and (3) an instructor's right to direct student action. This sequence of second assessments in Lines 3-7 reveals the interlocutors' drive to affiliate with the others, at the potential costs enumerated above. The insistence that Berta can complete the task offers support in response to Berta's hearably discouraged initial assessment. Ignacio and Marta in particular did not have to say anything — nor had they been selected to speak — but they did so as a show of solidarity with Berta.

A show of solidarity with a fellow student's difficulty might be expected in any friendly classroom; however, the presentation of that support is in this case informed by a shared culture and history. The chorus of *sí se puede* animates a phrase popularized by the Mexican-American labor rights leaders César Chavez and Dolores Huerta, founders of the United Farm Workers, which still uses the phrase as its official slogan. The direct connection of the phrase to the farm workers' rights movement is especially relevant in this setting, given that most of these students are employed as crop workers in nearby strawberry fields. In fact, a portrait of Chavez hangs on the wall of the classroom (see Figure 3), reflecting the community center's understanding of Chavez's significance if not the students'.

Figure 6.9: A portrait of Mexican-American labor leader César Chavez hangs on the wall of the literacy classroom behind the students.

Outside this context, English speakers in the U.S. may recall how the English translation ("yes, we can!") was used by Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2004. The utterance *sí se puede* thus has a significant cultural resonance, particularly for Mexican-American farm workers.

Sí se puede demonstrates solidarity not only because of its history but also because of its linguistic construction: In Spanish, *sí se puede* in fact has no explicitly stated subject. The translation to English is more closely approximated by something like "yes, it can be done". The lack of subject allows the phrase to apply not to a single person or group of people, but to a community more generally. This construction obscures agency and allows for a more collective endeavor. In the context of this classroom, this sense of shared intentionality corresponds with

the purpose of the class. Despite students' varying degrees of facility with Spanish and literacy skills, they are all there to learn together.

Ignacio's fist-pump during the chorus of *sí se puede* (see Figure 10) is similarly associated with workers' rights, a symbol of protest, solidarity and left-leaning political ideology since its emergence in Europe in the late 1880s (Korff & Peterson, 1992). This embodied show of solidarity is still associated with labor movements and other kinds of social activism. In this case, of course, the clenched fist is not a symbol of activism per se, but it retains its sense of solidarity, especially when paired with the phrase *sí se puede*.

Figure 6.10: Student Ignacio (third from right) pumps his fist.

Whether these symbols (*sí se puede*; the clenched fist) here retain the sense of resistance they acquired through decades of deployment in political movements is less clear. Certainly, in encouraging Berta to do the work, Ignacio is in fact aligning with the institution (i.e., the classroom) rather than opposing it. However, there is a sense in which the adult literacy classroom is itself a space of liberation. Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, the mission of the organization that offers these classes is "aiding, organizing, and empowering" the area's indigenous immigrants. Literacy education aligns with this mission in that literacy — and education more generally — is often promoted as a path to empowerment for marginalized groups, as previously discussed.

That these symbols have been adopted by indigenous immigrants new to the U.S. demonstrates their cultural influence. For these students, the phrase *sí se puede* and the accompanying clenched fist are resources for affiliating with one another, as the group does with Berta, with as well as with a larger historical movement that has fought for workers' and minorities' rights throughout the world for decades. They are symbols of solidarity, both locally and globally.

After the chorus of *sí se puede* described in Excerpt 4, Isa offers a classification of the task followed by further direction on the activity. The continuation of the excerpt appears in the following pages.

```
Excerpt 4: I won't be able to (cont'd.)

6  Isa    >sí  se puede.<=
           yes one can
          >yes you can.<=

7          =lo  de- es    un ejercicio
            the of  it-is an exercise
          =the- it's an exercise.

8          lo- lo  quiero que  lo trate   de hacerlo  mejor   que se puede
           the the I-want that it you-try of to-do-it best    that you-can
          I want you to try to do it the best you can
```

Isa's "sí se puede" in Line 6 is hearably rushed and latched to the following turn,

allowing Isa to validate the other students' support while holding on to a turn that has come to

hearable completion (Schegloff, 1998). In her next turn, after an abandoned turn-initial "the", Isa

explains that "it's an exercise" (Line 7). Classifying the task as an "exercise" rather than an exam

or other higher-stakes activity indicates that Berta needn't worry about her ability in this case —

that the purpose of the task is not to assess her proficiency, but rather to bolster it, through

practice. Isa clarifies this position in Line 8 ("I want you to try it the best you can"). Isa's

insistence that Berta is capable of doing the task, then, may have less to do with her actual

judgment of Berta's ability, and more in her belief in the value of practice. In other words,

whether Berta completes the task with accuracy is beside the point — rather, the task is an

opportunity for Berta to make an effort. Isa is demonstrating her stance toward Berta's ability to

try to complete the task, at the very least.

Isa's reference in Line 8 to what *she wants* reasserts her position as the institutional

authority in the classroom. Whereas the other students can provide encouragement, only the

instructor may make actual demands of a student. Further, Isa's direction to Berta to try to do the

task to the best of her ability backtracks somewhat from her previous "yes you can". In Line 8,

the issue becomes not whether Berta is capable of doing the task, but whether she will try her

best. Of course, one may "try one's best" and fail anyway. Isa's instruction to Berta, then, suggests that what is important in this case is that Berta try to do the exercise, not that she complete it accurately.

6.5 Conclusions and implications for learning

The excerpts presented in this chapter have exemplified the use of assessment sequences, both formal and informal, to demonstrate empathy and build social affiliation in the classroom. When assessments are deployed by the instructor, they publicly evaluate student proficiency and more subtly socialize the student into expected classroom behavior. As demonstrated in Excerpt 1, IRE sequences can provide positive evaluation while at the same time repairing a partially inaccurate response through embedded correction, a twofold accomplishment that manages to build affiliation through encouragement while simultaneously doing the necessary pedagogical work of error correction. The assessment sequence in Excerpt 2 revealed a student's embodied strategy for pursuing teacher assessment, and demonstrated the importance of materiality and gesture in competent classroom interaction.

When assessments are made by students, on the other hand, as in Excerpts 3 and 4, they invite second assessments that present an opportunity for multi-party disagreement that in fact builds social affiliation — through empathy — for the student making the original evaluation. In this way, assessments can invite additional assessments, particularly in a setting such as this one where participation by other parties is always a possibility.

These observations about assessments as a resource for building social affiliation through display of empathy offer important lessons about classroom learning. For one, such examples reveal how IRE sequences, despite criticism of their simplicity, can in fact be a resource for

social affiliation rather than alienation. Second, while assessment sequences can shed light on how participants build *local* social affiliation, they also reveal a cultural solidarity on a larger scale, as can be observed in the symbolism behind *sí se puede* and the clenched fist gesture. Assessment sequences, then, expose the resources used to manage epistemic authority while maintaining group solidarity — responsibilities that are sometimes at odds in classroom interactions.

Classroom assessment sequences can also shed light on the pedagogical role of student evaluations of classroom participation, which have not been investigated to the degree that teacher assessments have. Such sequences reveal how second assessments can display empathy and build social affiliation and even allude to shared cultural history — even when those second assessments disagree with the initial evaluation. These instances of disagreement with a negative student assessment may in fact be loci of student motivation. Viewed from this angle, it is clear that learner motivation is not an individual psychological construct but rather an interactional achievement.

Finally, student evaluations of class activities can offer insight into the social construction of student agency, as they give voice to students' experiences and reveal their dynamic understanding of class participation. The student assessments discussed in this chapter played an important role in directing the interactional projects of the classroom for the moments that followed. Although the evaluations themselves were negative, they resulted in both students receiving encouragement from teacher as well as students (albeit in the form of disagreement) and eventual cooperation by the student who made the initial assessment. In these examples, negative student assessments were opportunities to address students' concerns through

redirection or shows of solidarity — observations that invite some reconsideration of the role of student complaints in the classroom.

CHAPTER 7

Metalinguistic discourse as a resource for epistemic and affective stance-taking

7.1 Introduction

The kind of common ground or intersubjective understanding that is established in interaction is sometimes achieved through commenting on the discourse itself. In a class explicitly devoted to language and literacy, such commentary *about* language is common.

As a literacy class, this setting provides opportunities for students to reflect on their understanding of language. This metalinguistic awareness may arise as an understanding of the symbolic nature of letters and written words, or it may be at the level of understanding communicative intent. Displays of metalinguistic awareness can provide insight into speakers' intersubjective understanding of one another. Language is, after all, a tool for communication. These students' awareness of language and communication arises in both pedagogical moments and more conversational ones.

The analysis here will make use of the distinction between language about language (metalanguage) and language about language *use* (metapragmatics) discussed by Laihonen in a study on language ideologies held by speakers of Rumanian Banat (2008). Indeed, an investigation into both metalanguage and metapragmatics in everyday conversation can greatly illuminate implicit beliefs about one's own language, other languages, literacy, and communicative practices broadly.

The following analysis will address displays of metalinguistic awareness (Excerpts 1, 2, and 3) and metapragmatic awareness (Excerpts 4 and 5). In other words, the first two instances reveal participants' orientation to language as a tool and illuminate their epistemic stances

toward these aspects of language form. By contrast, the last example reveals participants'

awareness of others and others' level of knowledge about them. Rather than revealing speakers'

K+ or K- position with regard to a particular aspect of language, as in Excerpts 1 and 2, Excerpt

3 reveals speakers' stances toward communicating and its social consequences. Comparing these

instances presents a contrast between what students are learning in class and how they are

"permitted" to use that knowledge outside the classroom.

Stance-taking with regard to one's own language necessarily emerges from deeply

entrenched power dynamics that impose controls over language access and ways of using

language. The result of such power dynamics are directly observable in this adult literacy

classroom, which only exists to serve the many indigenous Mexican adults who not only have

been denied the opportunity to attend school, but who have also seen their native languages

scorned in favor of the colonial language Spanish by the privileged classes in Mexico.

These excerpts demonstrate how discussion about language and its use in the literacy

classroom can reveal important historical and political influences on these speakers' linguistic

awareness. Importantly for this study, such reflexive language can also be the nexus of complex

negotiations of epistemic authority and social affiliation.

7.2 Language about language

The following excerpts of classroom interaction exemplify metalanguage in the sense of

language about language itself.

7.2.1 Letter names

An important first step toward literacy is the awareness that letters have names. As a component of alphabetic letter knowledge, letter-name knowledge is in fact a key predictor of literacy acquisition in children — according to some research, possibly the best single predictor (Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Matthews, 1984). Aside from its potential for literacy acquisition itself, letter-name knowledge has interactional consequences as well — students who know the names of letters are able to talk about those letters. In Excerpt 1 below, instructor Isa has been teaching the letters of the Spanish alphabet to two beginning students. Just before the excerpt, she has arrived at the letter *x*, pronounced *equis* in Spanish. She names the letter and has the students repeat the name after her, then she moves beyond repetition to explanation of the significance of the word *equis*, explaining that letters have names, just like people:

```
Excerpt 1: This is called x

1 Isa  aqui dice    x
       here it-says x
       here it says x

2      dice
       it-says
       it says

3      ya      escribieron  su   nombre
       already you-all-wrote your name
       you all already wrote your name

4      ve   como nosotros
       see  how  we
       see  how  we

5      yo me     llamo  Isa
       I  myself I-call Isa
       I am called Isa

6      y   este se     llama    x
       and this itself it-calls x
       and this is called x
```

Excerpt 1 entails a comment about the structure or function of language, or *metalanguage*. The instructor, Isa, employs a comparison to explain the concept that letters have names. Such a notion might be taken for granted by someone who acquired literacy in childhood, but for these students, such an idea is novel. It is also somewhat complex — to understand that letters have names requires an awareness that the phonemic representation of a letter in the context of a word differs from the way it sounds when we talk about it, and, for that matter, the way it looks when it is written down. The very basic, underlying assumptions about written language, then, are predicated on an understanding of multiple levels of representation.

Isa's explanation relies on the students' awareness of their own names — that their names are a form of identification and not the person herself. In this way, names of people are perhaps our first foray into metalinguistic awareness. Though children certainly learn the names of objects early in linguistic development, it is rare that these names are actually referred to as such. We do not, in other words, typically talk about a round toy as being "named ball"; rather, we would usually say that the object "is a ball". Names of people, on the other hand, are frequently introduced using the metalanguage "his/her/my name is". Such language contains explicit reference to the fact that the name is separate from the person but that it represents the person in some way. Early in their linguistic development, children learn common and proper nouns through different processes, reflecting a remarkable degree of syntactic sophistication (Katz, Baker, & Macnamara, 1974).

Notably, the Spanish verb *llamarse*, which the instructor uses to talk about her own name and the name of the letter *x*, is a reflexive verb.

Lines 5 and 6, reproduced below, demonstrate the verb's reflexivity:

```
5      yo me     llamo  Isa
       I  myself I-call Isa
       I am called Isa

6      y   este se     llama    x
       and this itself it-calls x
       and this is called x
```

The reflexive pronouns *me* and *se* are used with the verb *llamar* to indicate that the action

is being done to *myself* and to *itself,* respectively. Such construction is itself an example of

metalanguage: It refers explicitly to the language used to name something else. It also requires

that the speaker conjugate the verb appropriately depending on the subject — something she

would not have had to do if she had used the *my/its name is* construction. Isa uses this reflexive

construction in two parallel statements to effectively make her comparison between her own

name and the letter name.

In arguing for the reflexive nature of names themselves, John Lucy noted that "a proper

name denotes a particular object not by virtue of signaling some substantive information about

its properties but only by indexing the existence of a conventional label for that specific object"

(1993, p. 10). In this sense, he says, names are reflexive. Appealing to what is "conventional"

necessarily alludes to the social context in which these names arise. As neutral as something like

the alphabet may seem, they too can be traced to ideologies about power and class. Labov's work

on *r*-lessness arguably launched the field of variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 1966). (Of

course, most of these discussions about letters and their perceived ties to social class, ethnicity,

or other group are in fact discussions about *sounds* — a common conflation that complicates

many discussions about letter names. In other words, Bostonians still spell Harvard with its *r*s,

even when they are dropped in speech.) In England, the letter *h* — in both pronunciation and

writing — has been a source of conflict since its introduction to England by the Normans in 1066 (Rosen, 2015). Indeed, *h*'s history as a letter that was introduced by a conquering foreign army reminds us of the politically charged origin of language, down to the very sounds (and, therefore, letters) we use. The letter *h* is also a useful example of letter names that bear little aural resemblance to the phoneme they represent in actual speech. In most varieties of American English, the letter name is pronounced [eɪ t͡ʃ], completely omitting the voiceless fricative [h] that most American speakers would produce when speaking the letter in a word. In Spanish, the letter is pronounced [a t͡ʃe] and is silent in speech.

The letter being discussed in Excerpt 1 is similarly problematic: Its letter name in Spanish does not sound like the phoneme it represents. As noted in the discussion of Rogelio's difficulty with the letter in the previous chapter, the letter *x*, pronounced *equis* [ekis], represents a number of different phonemes in modern Spanish: [ks], [s], [x], [h], and [ʃ]. This incongruity between representation (letter name) and essence (phoneme) is not unique to the alphabet. The arbitrary relation between signifier and signified is central to Saussure's model about language. However, it should be noted that these examples aside, most letters in the alphabet do, thankfully, make use of the phoneme they typically represent.

Isa begins her explanation with "here it says *x*" in Line 1, with "it" in this case referring to the written alphabet. She follows in Line 2 with a repeat of the verb *dice* ("it says"), a turn that is abandoned in favor of Line 3, where she begins her comparison of letter names to people's names. She begins this comparison by reminding the students that they have already written their names on their worksheets. Such a reminder references not only the fact that these students have names of their own, but also refers to the action of writing the name down. Such a comment alludes to the fact that these students not only have names, but that they *know* that they have

names. They must have knowledge of their own names, in other words, to be able to write them down in the first place. Isa's comment in Line 3, then, requires that she know what the students know about their own abilities. Put another way, this action communicates to the students that Isa knows that *they* know that they have names because of the fact that they just wrote them down.

Isa's reference to the students' own names makes relevant the concept of name-having. Her next utterance in Line 4 ("see how we") is also abandoned, giving way to Line 5, in which Isa restarts by referring to her own name: "I am called Isa". (In Spanish, the reflexive verb *llamarse*, translated as "to be named" or "to be called" is used more frequently than the copular construction "my name is".) Whereas Line 4 was oriented toward the group (with its use of the pronoun "we"), Line 5 refers only to Isa's name. Isa chooses to use herself as an example, rather than the whole group, perhaps a single name is more useful as a comparison to a single letter's name. Whatever her reasons for abandoning her turn in Line 4, the multiple restarts in this interaction reflect some trouble in her explanation.

In Line 6, Isa completes the comparison by naming the letter: "and this is called *x*". In this sequence, Isa has drawn on what she knows to be students' prior knowledge about people having names to talk about *letters* having names as well. She calls attention to this prior knowledge and makes it relevant by reminding the students that they had written their names on their papers. Such a comparison requires that Isa believe that students already have a concept of proper names for people, and that they are able to extend that concept to not only inanimate but also abstract items such as letters. Isa is making a claim about these students' epistemic access to this concept, and to their ability to abstract such a concept to situations other than people's names.

Although for the most part Excerpt 1 details a relatively typical pedagogical moment in terms of epistemic balance — the teacher is providing the explanation while the students listen — student knowledge is still extremely relevant. This group of students has learned how to write their own names on their paper — one of the first skills students learn in literacy class — a skill that Isa ties to the discussion of letter names.

7.2.2 Recalling the name of an illness

Metalanguage is also used in discussions less explicitly about literacy per se. A look at another student-teacher interaction highlights the use of metalanguage in the initiation of a word search. In Excerpt 2 below, Isa is helping Griselda read and respond to a lesson about the importance of vaccines. That such a topic is included in the course text reflects its design for adult learners, as well as its ideological orientation as pro-vaccination. Isa elicits Griselda's input as she begins to list some of the illnesses that vaccines can prevent, but she runs into trouble when trying to name a certain illness that causes small bumps on the skin. She asks what the illness is called and describes the bumps, using her own hand as a platform to demonstrate the symptom, before she utters the name: smallpox.

```
Excerpt 2: Vaccines

1  Isa  entonces ahí   nos está  diciendo
          so        there us  it-is telling
          so there it's telling us

2       que  porque son      importantes las vacunas
          that why     they-are important    the vaccines
          why vaccines are important

3       para que  son      importantes las vacunas.
          for  what they-are important    the vaccines
          why are vaccines important.
```

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```
4  Gri  la  gripa:,
         the flu
         the flu:,

5  Isa  para <evitar> la  gripa,
         to   prevent the flu
         to <prevent>, the flu,

6        las uh: (.) enfermedades,
         the          illnesses
         the uh: (.) illnesses

7  Gri  sí.
         yes
         yes.

8  Isa  como diarrea, (.) este:,
         like diarrhea     um
         like diarrhea, (.) um

9  Isa  como se    llama   la  enfermedad, (.)
         how  itself it-calls the illness
         what do they call the illness, (.)

10       con  los granitos,
         with the little-bumps
         with the little bumps,

11       >°como se    llama,°<
           how  itself it-calls,<
         >°what is it called,°<=

12       virue:la,
         smallpox
         smallpox,

13 Gri  así  se    llama?
         thus itself it-calls?
         that's what it's called?

14 Isa  aja,
         uh-huh
         uh-huh,
```

Isa's first question to Griselda in Line 3 ("why are vaccines important.") has the
hallmarks of a known-answer question — it directly follows Isa's remark about the book having
explained why vaccines are important, and it has turn-final downward intonation. Because these
kinds of questions require that the instructor in fact know the answer, such a question conforms

to the epistemic asymmetry expected in a classroom setting: that the instructor is more knowledgeable than the student. This teacher-student participation framework is reinforced by Isa's correction in Line 5, in which she emphasizes the word *prevent*.

Unlike a known-answer question, however, Isa's question in Line 9 appears to be actually seeking information. She is not looking directly at Griselda when she produces Lines 9 and 10, but rather looks down at her own hands, which she uses to demonstrate the "little bumps" by moving her right forefinger over the top of her left hand in a circular motion (see Figure 1).

Figure 7.1: Instructor Isa (left) demonstrates "little bumps" on her hand to student Griselda (Line 10).

With the motion of her hand, Isa is depicting the physical quality of the illness on her hand, using a "local metric" to describe something not immediately present (Goodwin, 2003). Still not locating the name of the disease, Isa quietly and hurriedly asks again "what is it called" before finally producing the name in Line 12 ("smallpox), at which point her gaze returns to Griselda.

Griselda's question in Line 13 seeking confirmation for the name of the illness under discussion orients not to the illness itself or its relationship to vaccines, but to its *name*. This orientation maintains the focus on the activity of searching for the name smallpox, rather than the activity dictated by the lesson, which was to discuss the merits of vaccination. The shifted focus of this interaction accompanied a shift in the epistemic ecology as well: In making public her inability to recall the name of the illness, Isa exposed a (temporary) lack of epistemic authority over the topic. This leveling of the epistemic gradient has interactional consequences: Instead of participating purely as a student who is responding to a teacher's known-answer questions, Griselda is now able to affiliate with Isa as a co-participant in the word search. In this case, Isa's use of metalanguage served to level the epistemic gradient as opposed to reinforcing the typical teacher-student epistemic asymmetry.

The vaccine discussion also exemplifies an important objective of the literacy class, which is to educate students not only about reading and writing, but also about life skills. Many of the lessons in the class textbook teach literacy skills through the use of this type of content. Lessons explore parenting skills, nutrition, hygiene, and financial literacy, and other skills. Because these students are adults with many years of experience with the world but with limited Spanish proficiency, such lessons reinforce knowledge they already possess, but perhaps lack the language to talk about it. The vaccines discussion is an example of this scenario. The

construction of Griselda's confirmation-seeking question to Isa ("that's what it's called") in Line 13 suggests that Griselda knew about the existence of smallpox, but did not know what it was called in Spanish until this interaction. This use of metalanguage to discuss the name of something already known to both parties is common in this classroom. Discussions like these rely on and build on students' already held expertise to impart new knowledge. In this way, the literacy class constantly acknowledges and ratifies student knowledge in a way that is unique to adult education.

7.2.3 Disputing a literary genre

Though in the previous examples, student knowledge was alluded to or elicited by the teacher, students may also assert their epistemic authority over a topic, as in the following interaction between a male student, Rogelio, and a volunteer teaching assistant, Cristina. Prior to this interaction, Rogelio had read aloud a Mexican folk story called *La Calle de la Quemada* (*The Street of the Burned Woman*). The legend tells the story of a beautiful young viceroy's daughter, Doña Beatriz, who lived in Mexico City during the Spanish conquest in the mid-sixteenth century (Janvier, 1910). Doña Beatriz's beauty attracted suitors from far and wide, who fought each other for her hand in marriage. Doña Beatriz, troubled by this fighting, decided to destroy her beauty by burning herself. One suitor, Don Martín, declared that he still loved Beatriz despite her injuries, and the two were subsequently married. A street in central Mexico City, La Quemada, is said to be named for Doña Beatriz.

During Rogelio's reading of the story, he paused and sighed frequently. After Rogelio finishes reading the story aloud, Cristina, treating his storytelling trouble as reflecting a lack of engagement with the story, asks, "You don't like the story, do you?" This negative polar

question has several functions: First, it makes public Ariadna's epistemic stance toward

Rogelio's experience of the story. Second, it offers a potential account for Rogelio's observable

disinterest in the story. Third, it allows for the possibility of a student not liking the class

material and expressing that opinion, which is indeed how Rogelio responds, following with a

justification.

```
Excerpt 3: This is not a story

1  Cri  no  le  gusta      el  cuento no?
        not you it-pleases the story  no
        you don't like the story, do you?

2  Rog  no, no  me gusta
        no  not me it-pleases
        no, I don't like it

3  Cri  heh heh heh

4  Reg  no. a mí  me gusta     los cuentos pero son
        no  to me me it-pleases the stories but  they-are
        no. I like stories but they are

5       habla      más- (.) más  correcto=
        they-talk more     more correct
        they talk more more correct

6       =esto no  es un cuento
         this not is a  story
         this is not a story
```

Cristina's initial question to Rogelio is framed with negative polarity and thus invites a

"type-conforming" "no" answer (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Rogelio fulfills this expectation,

responding with a partial repeat of Cristina's question ("no, I don't like it") a format that allows

for an alignment with the assumption in Cristina's question while indexing Rogelio's rights to

his own stance on the story. The laughter that follows orients to the potential inappropriateness

of Rogelio's negative assessment of the story. As a student, Rogelio is positioned as subordinate

to the teaching staff in the domain of course materials. Though the teaching staff does not carefully curate every aspect of the lessons — generally, students work through the entire textbook at their own pace — they are still somewhat responsible for the content of the course. The staff, in other words, is more closely aligned with the institution (i.e., the class) than the students are. Criticism of the course materials, then, may potentially be interpreted as criticism of the class and, by extension, of the teaching staff. Cristina's laughter in Line 3 treats Rogelio's criticism as non-serious. In this sense, the laughter can be viewed as commenting on Rogelio's stance with respect to the story.

Rogelio's criticism of the story had the potential to disrupt the hierarchy of authority in the classroom. However, as observed by Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff, breaches such as this can serve an interactional function — they can, in fact, index intimacy. That both parties laugh together locates the laughter as a component of an affiliative sequence (Jefferson, Sacks, & Schegloff, 1987).

Rogelio follows Cristina's laughter by repeating his negation ("no"), then offering a clarification of his response. He insists that he likes stories, but that stories are different from what they have just read (Lines 4-6). Rogelio's explanation here is predicated on a differing definition of the word "story" (*cuento* in the original Spanish). Rogelio has some trouble producing his characterization of a story, however, beginning and then abandoning a first attempt in Line 4 ("I like stories but they are"), and stumbling over an unclear description in Line 5 ("they talk more more correct"). He concludes the sequence with the assertion that the legend "is not a story".

Rogelio justifies his distaste for the story by offering not a critique of the story per se, but rather a clarification of his own definition of the word "story," prefaced by his insistence that he

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does, in fact, like stories. This pivot from the original dispute — whether Rogelio likes the story — to a new one — whether the legend is a story at all — relies on Rogelio's epistemic stance toward the genre of a story. In asserting that this legend is not a story, he is asserting a claim about his own knowledge vis-à-vis stories and their content. The apparent mismatch between Rogelio's definition and the instructor and lesson's definitions of the term "story" should be analyzed within its cultural context. Rogelio goes on to give his account of the content of a real story in the following lines. After Rogelio's assertion that the legend is "not a story" in Line 6, there is about one minute of unrelated discussion with another instructor, after which Cristina returns to the first page of the legend. In Line 7, she relates to Rogelio some information she has found in the book about the story's origins.

```
    Excerpt 3: This is not a story (cont'd.)

7  Cri  ah. dice    que   viene    de:  leyendas mexicanas
         ah  it-says that  it-comes from legends  mexican
         ah. it says that it comes from mexican legends

8        de    antes. y   después de la  conquista,
         from before and after   of the conquest
         from before and after the conquest

9  Rog  sí  pero habla     (un poco) de amor
         yes but  it-talks (a  bit)  of love
         yes but it talks a bit about love

10 Cri  aja,
         uh huh,

11 Reg  no  es un cuento
         not is a  story
         it is not a story

12 Cri  tiene  otro: tema
         it-has other theme
         it has another: theme

13 Rog  sí  [otro  tema
         yes  other theme
         yes [another theme
```

```
14 Cri      [tema  de: (.) sí
              theme of      yes
             [theme of: (.) yes

15 Rog  cosas  de mujeres,
        things of women
        women's things,

16 Cri  <ha ha ha,> (.) sí
         ha ha ha       yes
        <ha ha ha,> (.) yes

17 (0.4)

18 Rog  lo- los    que  yo conozco,
            the-PL that I  know
        th- the ones that I know, (.)

19      cuento es- como (0.2)
        story  is  like
        story is- like (0.2)

20      de (.) conejo o  burro  o  del    perro o  el  coyote
        of     rabbit or donkey or of-the dog   or the coyote
        about (.) a rabbit or donkey or about a dog or coyote

21 Cri  de animales.
        of animals
        about animals.

22 Rog  de animales sí.
        of animals  yes
        about animals yes.

22 Cri  aha,
        uh huh,

22 Rog  ^es así
         it-is like-that
        ^it's like that
```

In Lines 7 and 8, Cristina relates to Rogelio the information she has found in the text that
describes the story's origin: that comes from a book called *Mexican Legends from Before and
After the Conquest* (Sodja & Sodja, 1997). The information that this story comes from a
published collection lends institutional authority to the argument that *The Street of the Burned
Woman* is a legitimate story. In Rogelio's response (Line 9), he first concedes this point with an

affirmation, but then follows his affirmation with a "but", signaling a continued alignment with his previous stance. With this stance, he rejects the book as the authority of what counts as a story in favor of his own understanding. He goes on to explain that because the story discusses "love" and "women's things", it is not a *story*. It is not a story's origin but its content that lend it legitimacy. Cristina guesses at the importance of story content in Line 12 ("it has another: theme"), which is subsequently repeated by Rogelio. The stories *he* knows, he goes on to explain, feature animals (Lines 18-22). He names specific animals, indicating an even greater familiarity with the details of such stories.

Rogelio follows his explanation in Line 22 with "it's like that", a response that reclaims his authority over the matter by reaffirming his characterization of a story and closing the sequence. Through this somewhat labored explanation, Rogelio has asserted that a narrative can be classified as a story if it is about animals, but not if it is about romance — or, as he describes it, "women's things". He has also stated that he does, in fact, like stories, but only the ones that qualify as such. There are two assertions at issue here: one's subjective opinion about a story on the one hand, and the objective nature of stories themselves on the other. The interaction between Cristina and Rogelio began with an inquiry into Rogelio's opinion about the story, an inquiry that presumes a shared understanding that it is, in fact, a story. Rogelio, however, turns the discussion into one about the nature of a story itself. Such a pivot mitigates any impropriety that might come from Rogelio's stated negative judgment of the story and allows Rogelio to make an epistemic claim about stories more broadly.

Though this tale took place in what is now Mexico, its characters and subject matter are more European than indigenous. The characters are members of the colonial nobility, which was, generally speaking, of European descent. The tale is listed among collections of Mexican folk

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tales, but it has a more European character than many indigenous folk tales, which are more likely to feature animals and deities than suitors and damsels. The very prospect of suitors fighting each other to marry a viceroy's daughter is only possible in an aristocratic society such as the New Spanish nobility. Rogelio's assertion that this tale is "not a story" indicates that this story does not fit his schema of an authentic story of the type with which he is familiar. Rogelio's initial rejection of the book's authority on what makes a story in favor of a folk characterization further betrays this tension between European or Western-aligned cultural schemas and indigenous ones.

Rogelio's dismissal of *La Calle de la Quemada* reveals a cultural divergence between European or colonial-style stories and indigenous stories. With his judgment, Rogelio is demonstrating his cultural background — one that has informed this schema about stories and their content. He does not explicitly reference his cultural background in evaluating the story; rather, the cultural context is implied by his stated opinion about the story.

Rogelio's assertion about what makes a story a story also reflects a crucial metapragmatic awareness about the nature of stories, and a judgment about the content of such a genre. His assessment takes a strong epistemic stance about the nature of stories — in other words, his statement asserts what he *knows* to be true about stories and their content.

This interaction raises questions about the authority to make meaning and to define a genre. For Rogelio, a story is characterized by the presence of animals, not romance — in other words, content, and not necessarily form, determines genre. This definition of a story clashes with the institutional definition, according to the class textbook to which the instructor refers, and the instructor herself. Cristina does not at first acknowledge the possibility of alternative definitions, as demonstrated by her question "You don't like the story, do you?" (Line 1).

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Embedded in this question is the presumption that the narrative is, in fact, a story. It is only after Rogelio changes the discussion to one about the nature of stories that the institutional definition of a story is disputed. Rogelio asserts his epistemic stance on the nature of the story genre, even after Cristina provides evidence of institutional alignment with a view other than his own.

This dispute about genre and authenticity points to the dynamic nature of meaning-making. Meaning is not fixed but rather socially constructed and context-dependent. Rogelio's dismissal of the institutional definition of a story in favor of alignment with his own folk definition is consistent with his limited exposure to formal, Western-style education. Unlike someone educated in a typical Western classroom, he has not been trained to rely on the authority of textbooks, and as such is free to espouse his own definition instead. Though Rogelio's resistance to the institutional definition of literary genres might on the one hand be viewed as an obstacle to classroom assimilation, it could on the other hand reveal some of the epistemic and cultural resources that less traditional students can bring to the classroom, and how meaning-making can emerge interactionally when student and instructor work to reach a shared understanding.

The previous interaction is a manifestation of differing language ideologies — specifically, ideologies about what counts as a story. As this interaction makes clear, different rhetorical traditions can impart differing beliefs about what characteristics a story should have. This interaction demonstrates how even our understanding of something as ostensibly simple as the definition of a story is a social construction and subject to dispute.

7.3 Language about language *use*

Language ideologies are especially apparent in metapragmatic communication. Whereas the previous two excerpts exemplified communication about language *itself*, frequently talk about language discusses language *use*, or pragmatics. Metapragmatic communication is particularly reliant on an intersubjective understanding of others' beliefs and expectations. Explicit discussion about turn-taking rules, politeness, and other highly contextual linguistic questions reveals an understanding that appropriate use of language depends on what would be expected in that particular setting and with that particular recipient.

7.3.1 Self-reflection assignment

Rogelio's epistemic stance-taking toward the story described above is followed by affective stance-taking toward the lesson more broadly, illustrated in the following section. After Cristina and Rogelio's discussion about the story, they turn to a series of comprehension questions in the workbook, designed to assess students' attitudes toward the materials and their own work. Such an activity is itself reflective, of course, and because this course is a language and literacy course, reflection on one's own progress in the course is necessarily metalinguistic. An activity that prompts reflection about one's progress in literacy acquisition requires not only *talking* about one's own language use, but also *reading* and *writing* about it.

Self-reflection has been argued to be an important pedagogical tool. Luminaries of educational theory have identified reflection as critical to learning, and language as indispensible in this process. Vygotsky argued that full consciousness — which he defines as "awareness of the activity of the mind" — is achieved only through reflection on the *how* of our actions (Vygotsky 1962; p. 170). In practice, Dewey exhorted teachers to encourage the use of language

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as a *conscious* tool of thought: in other words, to "direct students' oral and written speech, used primarily for practical and social purposes, to become a conscious tool of conveying knowledge and assisting thought" (Dewey, 1993; p. 239). That both Vygotsky and Dewey appeal to the notion of consciousness reveals the enormous significance of reflection. Reflecting on one's own thoughts is more than a useful activity for writing development — it is the foundation of consciousness itself.

The interaction transcribed below is part of a series of reflection questions found at the end of the unit in the class textbook. The previous question had asked whether Rogelio had found the unit's activities to be difficult, very difficult, or easy, and Rogelio had responded "difficult". The next question, which begins the following excerpt, asks how Rogelio felt while doing the aforementioned activities. Rogelio reads the question aloud (Lines 1-2) and, after some initial trouble with the word *realizarlas* ("to complete them", with *them* referring to the unit's activities), he and Cristina read the list of possible responses. What follows is a discussion of Rogelio's feelings and the legitimacy of those feelings.

```
Excerpt 4: Nervous

1  Rog   y   es: (.) como sintió, (.)
           and it-is  how  did you-feel
           and it's: (.) how did you feel (.)

           al    momento, de realiz- de realizará:?
           at-the moment   of comple- of you-will-complete
           at the moment   of comple- of you will complete?

2  Cri   realizarlas.
           to-complete-them.
           completing them.

3  Rog   realizarlas.
           to-complete-them.
           completing them.
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4  Cri   como se       sintió?
         how  yourself you-felt?
         how did you feel?


5  Rog   mm tranquilo:, o  nervioso.
            calm        or nervous
         mm calm:, or nervous.



6  Rog   pues [sí  nervioso
         well  yes nervous
         well [yes nervous


7  Cri        [o  muy  nervioso he he
               or very nervous
               [or very nervous he he


8  Rog   <no  muy> nervioso, pero (.) [no-
          not very nervous   but       no
         <not very> nervous, but (.)  [no-


9  Cri                               [pero sí  nervioso.
                                      but  yes nervous
                                      [but nervous.


10 Rog   nervioso,=
         nervous
         nervous,=


11 Cri   =un poco,  aja.
          a  little uh-huh
         =a little, uh-huh.


12 Rog   eso  es porque  no   sabe     °(como)°
         this is because not one-knows like
         this is because one doesn't °(know)°


13 Cri   sí  como es::
         yes like it-is
         yes like it's::


14 Cri   si algo     es dificil,
         if something is difficult
         if something is difficult,


15 Rog   sí  muy [difícil
         yes very  difficult
         yes very  difficult


16 Cri          [se      pone        nervioso.
                 oneself one-becomes nervous
                 one gets nervous
```

```
17      es:  natural. [haha
        it-is natural
        it's natural.  [haha

18 Rog               [es    natural.
                      it=is natural
                      it's natural.

19 Cri  aja.
        uh-huh
        uh-huh.
```

With this discussion, Rogelio's formerly authoritative epistemic stance toward the lesson — visible in his characterization of the story — has diminished. His difficulty with the unit's activities makes salient his identity as a student, and his position as a novice vis-à-vis Cristina and the classroom institution.

Still, he does retain epistemic authority over his own state of mind with regard to the activity. Cristina's question to Rogelio about his experience with the lesson acknowledges that Rogelio's perceptions about his abilities and his feelings toward the lesson are within his territory of experience (Heritage, 2011). His own experience with the lesson is his to comment on. For her part, Cristina's authority as a representative of the institution allows her to justify Rogelio's nervousness by reassuring him that it is "natural" to experience nervousness when doing something difficult (Lines 14-19).

This discussion hinges on the morality of expressing one's own feelings, and of having those feelings in the first place. Indeed, the progression of the lesson depends on the student's participation in this public intrusion into his inner experience. Self-reflection, now a common pedagogical tool in post-industrial classrooms, relies on students' facility with this kind of activity and with sharing those reflections with instructors and possibly other students. In this excerpt, we see how Rogelio is being socialized not only into classroom practices such as

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reading aloud and responding to comprehension questions, but also the practice of making public his affective stances toward those activities.

Because Cristina has no inner experience with Rogelio's nervousness, she has a delicate task in evaluating it. As an instructor, she also has a responsibility to ensure the progressivity of the lesson, while as a recipient of Rogelio's disclosure about his feelings, she has a responsibility to affiliate in some way. Her response is to validate his affective stance by reframing it as a general, "natural" response to difficulty. Such a response suggests that to become nervous in the face of difficulty is, in fact, the more moral response. It also implicitly disputes any potential argument for stoicism in the face of adversity, which in many societies is in fact a virtue. While most certainly an attempt to empathize with Rogelio's stated difficulty with the lesson, Cristina's response is not devoid of culturally bound ideologies about emotion and self-expression. Still, Rogelio does not dispute Cristina's assessment of Rogelio's stated nervousness; rather, he repeats it: "it's natural" (Line 18). Cristina follows with a confirmation of this assessment: "uh-huh" (Line 19).

The kind of self-reflection prompted by the textbook and discussed in Excerpt 4 by Rogelio and Cristina requires a sort of metacognition that is frequently encouraged in classrooms, and the inextricable role of language in such an activity. In this classroom in particular, because the aim is to teach reading and writing skills (and, to a lesser extent, oral communication skills), metalanguage can manifest not only as talking about talk, but as talking about reading, reading about writing, and so on. In each of these possible metacommunicative scenarios, ideologies underlying our communicative practices emerge. Excerpt 4 demonstrated the role of cultural assumptions (e.g., that it is "natural" to feel nervous when doing difficult schoolwork) as well as the ways that interlocutors negotiate the sometimes-delicate interactional

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problem of affiliating with one another while still asserting their respective epistemic authority over a variety of domains. It is in this way that detailed analysis of social interaction can reveal how culturally acquired ideologies, institutional hierarchies, and the basic human need to affiliate with each other are all intertwined.

Rogelio's epistemic and affective stance-shifting, and Cristina's responses to these stances, exemplify the dynamic, interactionally constructed nature of identity, authority, and institutional hierarchy, and highlight the role of ideologies about language, emotion, and self-expression.

7.3.2 The value of self-expression

In yet another day in the literacy class, students engaged in an even more explicit discussion of using language to express one's feelings, and in what contexts it is appropriate to do so. As part of the day's lesson, the day's instructor (Isa) has written the following Spanish sentence on the white board:

`Expresarme me hace sentir bien.`

The expression translates to "expressing myself makes me feel good." After having students repeat the spoken phrase a few times slowly, Isa launches into a brief explanation of the meaning of this expression, asserting that it is important to be able to speak to others. Implicit in this assertion is the assumption that self-expression is a positive activity, a value that is rooted in cultural beliefs about the individual, autonomy, and authenticity. Indeed, political science literature has identified self-expression, contrasted with "survival", as one of two major dimensions of cultural value variation across the world. Modernization, argues comparative

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political scientist Ronald Inglehart, leads societies away from survival values and toward self-expression values (Inglehart, 2007). The World Values Survey, which investigates people's values and beliefs and their change over time, has identified democratic post-industrial societies, including the United States, as one that highly values self-expression (World Values Survey Association, n.d.). Encouraging self-expression, then, is the direct manifestation of a language ideology that privileges "speaking one's mind." To further problematize the situation, such an ideology relies on an assumption that is it even possible to communicate one's own thoughts and feelings, and that it is in turn possible for them to be understood by others.

Such a value is of course not only dependent on culture, but also on local context, as Isa's students suggest in the discussion that unfolds after the sentence is repeated. The students problematize the assertion by introducing the notion of intimacy and how it can change one's desire to express oneself. Of course, intimacy itself is also culturally bound, with some societies valuing explicit expression of affection within the family, for example. Such a value is inextricably linked to the broader societal discourse around openness, authenticity, and disclosure (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2015).

In the following excerpt, students and teacher discuss the difficulty of talking to strangers about one's thoughts or feelings. Excerpt 5 highlights the stance of one student, Amalia, toward expressing herself to people outside her immediate family, as well as the ways that another student, Margarita, and the teacher, use embodied resources to affiliate with Amalia's stance and. Figures 2-5 following the transcript provide illustrations of some of these embodied resources, including gaze direction, body position, and hand gestures.

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Excerpt 5: I don't talk about my issues

1  Ama    como yo, yo no    platico     mis cosas
          like I   I  not    talk         my things
          like me, I  don't talk about my  issues


2         como a  una de mis hermanas
          like to one of my  sisters
          like (I do) to one of my  sisters


3         o  a  un  de mis hermanos
          or to one of my  brothers
          or to one of my  brothers


4         yo noo:
          I  not
          I  don't: ((Amalia shifts gaze to Margarita, who nods))


5         yo no  cuento mis cosas  con  personas que  no  conozco.
          I  not I-tell my  things with people   that not I-know
          I  don't tell my issues to people I don't know.


6  Isa    exacto.
          exactly
          exactly.
```


Figure 7.2: Student Amalia gestures toward self at *mis* ("my") in Line 1.

Figure 7.3: Amalia shifts gaze at *yo* ("I") in Line 4 to Margarita, who shakes her head.

Figure 7.4: Amalia gestures with both hands while looking at Isa at *cuento* ("tell") in Line 5.

Figure 7.5: Isa points at Amalia as she says *exacto* ("exactly") in Line 6

In Excerpt 5, the students discuss the difficulty of telling people outside one's immediate social circle what one thinks or how one feels. Amalia personalizes the discussion by prefacing her turn with the expression "like me," which makes relevant the uniqueness of her own experience and the possibility that others may have different experiences. She goes on to say that she does not discuss her "issues", then offers counterexamples of people she *would* presumably share her "issues" with: her sisters and brothers. These exemplars are followed in Line 4 by Amalia's lengthened "I don't", which is restated in Line 5 and then brought to completion ("I don't tell my issues to people I don't know"). The insertion of the examples (her sisters and brothers) and the restart indicate that Amalia is struggling to communicate her thoughts, making her stance unclear until the completion of Line 6. (It is noteworthy that Amalia exhibits this

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difficulty during a discussion about the *difficulty* of communicating with others.) The lack of intervention by either of her recipients until Line 7 (teacher Isa's "exactly") supports the observation that Amalia's point was not clear until the end. Isa's pointing gesture in Amalia's direction places emphasis on Isa's assessment of Amalia's observation, and also acts to reinforce her status as the teacher, as does her body position: Isa is standing, while the students are sitting down.

Intersubjectivity and its concomitant notion of "knowing an Other" are topically relevant to this interaction. Amalia's assertion that she doesn't disclose her "issues" to people she doesn't know speaks to the problem of opacity of mind. Amalia's reluctance to express herself to people other than her family keeps the contents of her mind relatively opaque to them, while, as she struggles to explain in the preceding lines, she has a different standard of openness with members of her immediate family. There is less opacity of mind, then, among family members than between strangers.

However, the phrase from the start of the lesson that prompted this discussion ("expressing myself makes me feel good") suggests that talking about one's thoughts and feelings, even to strangers, should be a positive experience. The phrase is also relevant to the larger goal of the literacy class, which is to strengthen not only students' reading and writing abilities, but also their general Spanish proficiency, which would include oral communicative skills. Less obviously, the lesson also imparts a cultural lesson about the value of self-expression, delivered in an environment meant to mimic the Western, postindustrial classroom (where such self-expression is fostered).

A closer investigation into some of the non-verbal resources employed during this interaction reveals the ways that interlocutors make use of the body to navigate the interactional

imperative to "know an Other" in real time. Toward the end of Line 4, as Amalia trails off her utterance starting *yo no* ("I don't"), she shifts her gaze to the student to her right, Margarita, who returns her gaze by shaking her head to match Amalia's *no*, then looks away. This head shake affiliates with Amalia's stance about talking to other people by claiming to have access to the teller's stance on the event or experience being shared (Stivers, 2008). Put another way, Margarita's head shake is an embodied reformulation of Amalia's stance toward expressing herself to others.

Because the "embodied potentiality for empathy" (Throop, 2012) is always present, we are able to understand various actions — including a head shake — as displaying empathy. Amalia's gaze toward Margarita is understood as a response-mobilizing action, which could have been followed by an assessment, a second story, or a number of other responses that could similarly show affiliation.

Margarita's nod and then shift of gaze away from Amalia yields the floor back to Amalia, allowing her to continue to reformulate her previous explanation and make even clearer her stance toward sharing with others. The instructor Isa's "exactly" in Line 6 is another indication of affiliation toward Amalia's stance, but is framed as an assessment, thereby making salient again Isa's position as teacher and re-orienting the group to the lesson. Margarita and Isa display their understanding of Amalia's stance toward self-expression in different ways at different moments in the interaction, illustrating the necessity to understand empathy as contextual and locally constructed.

7.4 Conclusions and implications for learning

Talk about language at every level — whether at that of the letter, of a story, or of interpersonal communication — is influenced by the social, historical, and political context surrounding it. In this classroom, a crucial contextual feature is the shared cultural background of its students and (some) teachers. The discussion about letter names occurs because these students, though adults, have had limited experience with the Spanish-language alphabet because of lack of access to formal education, which in turn can be traced to the linguistic, educational, and economic marginalization of indigenous people in Mexico. Rogelio's resistance to the institutional definition of "story" is also informed by his indigenous background — his insistence that stories feature animals (rather than beautiful noblewomen) stems from his familiarity with indigenous folk tales. Finally, the students' discussion about expressing oneself reveals the institutional inclination to privilege self-expression, and the students' discomfort with such self-expression outside certain intimate relationships, which in turn illustrates a dynamic understanding of the role of intimacy in communication.

These instances of metalinguistic communication reveal a reflexivity that is essential for human communication. Tomasello described metalanguage as a crucial aspect of cognitive development: "(D)iscourse about previous discourse is very special because as the child comprehends it, she is led to examine her own thinking from the perspective of the other" (Tomasello, 2009; p. 172). Indeed, when we talk about language, especially about language *use*, we are in fact discussing an essential aspect of human sociality.

At a fundamental level, acquisition of literacy skills depend on students' abilities to talk about language (Snow and Ninio, 1986). Much research on literacy acquisition studies children rather than adults, and treats literacy acquisition as a component of broader cognitive

development. Adult literacy students have already developed many of the meta-cognitive skills that typically accompany literacy skills in children who have access to formal education, but they may lack some of the metalanguage that is learned with literacy skills. Still, the adult students in this literacy class displayed metacommunicative abilities in a variety of ways, from conversations about names for things to discussions about communicating one's feelings to others.

The first excerpt about letter names demonstrated an explicit discussion of the kind of abstraction necessary for reading and writing. In this way, it revealed participants' orientation to language as a tool, illuminating participants' epistemic stances toward letter names. Letter names and the alphabet in general are aspects of metalanguage that may be foreign to these students, despite their ample experience with language itself. Further, as non-native speakers of Spanish, these students are learning these concepts for the first time in a language in which they may not be fully proficient. In this way, learning the alphabet in this situation is very different from the process in childhood.

The second excerpt about vaccines illustrated not only the student's epistemic stance toward language (specifically, the name of an illness), but also the teacher's. In this discussion, the teacher made use of both a known-answer question and an actual information-seeking question, with the interactional consequence of a more leveled epistemic gradient. In this excerpt, we saw how student recognition of the limitations of the teacher's knowledge may in fact allow students to affiliate with teachers and to engage differently with the material. The discussion about vaccination and smallpox also showed the role of prior student knowledge in a classroom that relies heavily on students' own backgrounds and life experiences in order to accomplish learning.

The third excerpt also illustrated participants' epistemic stance toward language, this time at the level of literary genre. At this level of linguistic analysis, there is more agency demonstrated by the student, as he asserts his authority over the story genre, even as it conflicted with the institutional definition of a story.

Excerpt 4, on the other hand, revealed the same student's affective stance toward the lesson, prompted by a discussion about the student's inner experience with the class activities. In this interaction, the student is still talking about language, though this time in a more emotive way. Such self-reflection is frequently elicited in classrooms as a way of increasing student awareness of the learning process. For these students, who have had limited experience in a formal classroom, this kind of reflection may not come as naturally as for those who have been socialized to do so.

The last example also featured self-reflection, though this time it was reflection about awareness of others and others' level of knowledge about oneself. Rather than revealing speakers' K+ or K- position with regard to a particular aspect of language, they revealed speakers' stances toward communicating and its social consequences.

In all of these instances, participants' revealed their epistemic (and, in some cases, affective) stances toward a particular aspect of language, from a letter name to the appropriateness of communicating one's inner feelings. Because this is a literacy class, talk about language is especially pervasive in this setting. Viewing these instances side by side presents a contrast between what these students are learning in class and how they are expected to use that knowledge outside the classroom. From a language ideologies perspective, analysis of students' metalanguage can offer important insight into students' attitudes not only toward what they are learning, but also toward interactional norms. More broadly, these examples reveal how

shifting epistemic ecologies in the classroom can play an important role in student learning,

identity construction, and teacher-student affiliation.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

At the heart of human sociality and undergirding all social interaction is the ability to share knowledge, feelings, and experiences — and to know that others share these as well. This intersubjective understanding, observable in epistemic and empathic communication, can give way to affiliation at the level of a conversational dyad, as well as at a broader, cultural level. Through ethnomethodological observation of this kind, we can gain insight into how cultural identification in socially constructed in even the most mundane interactions. This project has sought to hone in on this process of interactional group affiliation by analyzing the ways that a particular community expresses intersubjective understandings. While epistemic and empathic stance displays serve to build affiliation on a dyadic level, the interactions analyzed here show that they can also have the added function of maintaining identity with a larger group, reaching far beyond mere local, contemporaneous affiliation. Though interactional moments of cultural solidarity may not make explicit reference to a shared background, the we-relationship that transcends time and space ensures that the intersubjective understanding of a shared history is always already there.

Through an analysis of three common communicative resources for epistemic and affective stance-taking — namely, repair, assessment, and metalinguistic discourse — in a community of Mixtec migrants, I have aimed to demonstrate the ways that these resources can achieve social affiliation and, when relevant, cultural solidarity. Ethnomethodological analysis offers the level of granularity required to identify epistemic and empathic communicative resources in action and to observe their role in the highly dynamic, fluid nature of affiliative

interaction. In the classroom, this fluidity revealed itself when canonical classroom interactions such as assessments of student work or other-initiated repair transformed into moments of group solidarity. Such interactional dynamism reminds us that institutional and non-institutional talk are not always clearly delineated, particularly in settings like this one where a substantial part of the interactional business — even if it isn't explicitly stated — is to support the maintenance of a community.

7.1 Implications for learning

Each analytical chapter in this dissertation has concluded with a brief discussion of the pedagogical and learning implications of the observations made. Chapter 5 discussed a common interactional occurrence in the classroom — repair — and analyzed both teacher- and student-initiated repair and reformulation sequences. The chapter observed that while repair is not typically initiated by a student, when student-initiated repair does occur it may be to assert that student's epistemic authority over a particular domain. Such reversals of the epistemic gradient are noteworthy in the classroom, since teachers are usually the ones with the authority, and reveal the complex ways that students negotiate these displays of epistemic stance. These epistemic negotiations are also intricately tied to the process of socialization into normative classroom behavior. Such moments, then, can reveal not only students' means of epistemic stance-taking but also the interactional unfolding of socialization.

Chapter 6 examined assessment sequences, also typical in classroom interaction. In this setting, however, these interactional resources can assess not only students' progress but also the task or lesson itself. Assessment sequences may also reveal stances toward the larger goals of

learning the interactional norms of the classroom, gaining proficiency in Spanish, and even

becoming a competent member of a Western, post-industrial society.

Chapter 7 highlighted the ways that metalinguistic discourse, from letter names to genre

classification to talk about conversation, can be employed to promote self-reflection as well as to

assert one's own stance toward some discourse (for example, a story) and to elicit empathy.

These wide-ranging examples raise questions about the nature of learning. These students

are learning to read and write, surely, but through these practices, they are also acquiring the

norms of the Western, post-industrial classroom, practices for stance-taking, and the

conventional assumptions surrounding literary genres, to name a few. Though all these

interactions took place in a classroom setting (if a somewhat more informal classroom setting),

moments of learning arose even when explicit pedagogy was not going on. Such moments can

demonstrate the importance of detailed interactional analysis, in the classroom and out of it.

7.2 Methodological challenges and imperatives

Attempts to combine detailed ethnomethodological analysis with a broader picture of the

historical, political, and cultural factors that influence everyday interaction encounter competing

methodological philosophies. However, research that makes overtures to intersubjectivity — as

does phenomenology — aiming to capture the "lived experiences" of participants cannot *but*

acknowledge those participants' background. In this project, an understanding of the

community's history, language, and culture proved essential in understanding the various ways

that community does affiliation. Without knowledge of the cultural significance of the phrase "sí

se puede," for example, any analysis of its use in the classroom would be incomplete. Granted,

no one researcher can be made aware of all the relevant historical background that might shape

day-to-day interactions, but that doesn't mean no attempt should be made to bridge social

interaction and political history. Indeed, doesn't any work purporting to be intersubjective have

to acknowledge the ways that "being with others" manifests even in the most mundane-seeming

interactions?

When I began this work, I was interested in the ways that these participants' indigenous

identity is oriented to in regular conversations, and the connection between that cultural

identification and social affiliation. What I discovered over the course of my data collection and

analysis was that, perhaps unsurprisingly, practices for affiliating and aligning with one another

were more subtle and, relatedly, more fluid and artful than I had imagined. Mixtec participants

did not always orient publicly to their shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds, though they

sometimes did; however, that shared background is always present.

This project was limited in scope and resources. It is, by design, an individual endeavor.

The analysis was therefore limited to what I as the sole researcher and analyst was able to

identify, understand, and examine, as an outsider to the Mixtec community. This outsider status

meant that I had limited knowledge of, among other practices, the Mixtec language. Although

most of the interactions that took place in the classroom were in Spanish, there were moments

during which students and even at times the instructors spoke Mixtec, perhaps to clarify

something, or to be able to communicate with greater fluency. A fuller understanding of these

moments might have further illuminated these interactions. However, Mixtec is a remarkably

difficult language to learn, especially for speakers of Indo-European languages: It differs in

many major ways from the more commonly studied language. Yet another obstacle to learning

Mixtec is that few educational resources exist for those interested in studying the language. (The

relative lack of resources is undoubtedly due in part to its status historically as a lower-prestige

language, a status that was discussed in depth in Chapter 3.) Encouragingly, however, there are

an increasing number of resources available to people who want to learn Mixtec or who speak it

natively but want to study it in greater depth, including the intensive Mixtec summer course in

Oaxaca, Mexico, in which I participated. In addition, the community center in California where I

conducted my research has recently engaged in a project to prepare Mixtec-language materials

for its community members. Such materials have the goal not only of teaching Mixtec but also of

legitimizing it as a real language — not just a dialect. Yet another step in this direction was taken

recently with the establishment of a bilingual Mixtec-Spanish radio station, also a project of the

same community center. With these efforts, perhaps Mixtec and other stigmatized indigenous

languages will come to be more highly valued by people both inside and outside the Mixtec

community. For the time being, however, owing partially to these impediments to learning

Mixtec as well as to the scope of this project, I was limited to Spanish-language interactions for

my analysis.

Additional challenges involved in data collection were typical of many projects of this

kind. As is the case for many settings, this classroom featured several people talking at once,

making it difficult at times to hear the focal conversation. This difficulty rendered some of the

data unanalyzable. One challenge specific to more vulnerable populations arose during data

collection: Because of the uncertainty surrounding many of these participants' immigration

status, I did not seek out as much information about their personal histories as I would have liked

in order to gain a better understanding of their experiences. Further, there is a paucity of official

information available about indigenous communities, either in Mexico or in the U.S., partially

because the Mexican census does not always fully capture these communities, and because in the

U.S. indigenous people frequently live in the shadows. Therefore, any statistics I could find regarding number of Mixtec people living in Oaxaca or in California were estimates.

7.3 Future research directions

Future research on this community and the interactional resources its members use to affiliate (as well as disagree, inform, argue, and encourage) can build upon this first effort. I sincerely hope that this project contributes to a better understanding of this community, and how conversation analytical methods can offer a path to this understanding. Much of the existing research on immigrants in the U.S. takes a macro-level approach, often with the goal of identifying and describing patterns and trends in immigration. While certainly important, this research lacks the more humanizing view of these communities' everyday lives that ethnographic and discourse analytic research can reveal. Admittedly, such fine-grained analysis is more costly in terms of resources and time, but it is necessary if we want to reach a richer understanding of immigrants' lived experiences.

This project has investigated just one slice of the daily lives of one small but understudied migrant community. Through examining this community's social interactions, we can gain insight into how they behave with each other, how they view their language and culture, what has real relevance to them in their daily lives, and as was the focus for this project, what resources they call upon to affiliate with one another. As is evident by the very existence of a community center for indigenous immigrants, such group solidarity is crucial for this community.

The maintenance of a group identity is a social achievement and is done first and foremost through social interaction. It is therefore logical to look for these moments of group

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affiliation in conversation. The literacy classroom where I conducted my research is just one of many settings — institutional or otherwise — in which the indigenous immigrant community has opportunities to do this kind of affiliative interactional work. Interactions among members of this migrant community might also be observed at work (for example, in the strawberry fields or packing plants where many Mixtec migrants work), in indigenous children's classrooms, or at community events and meetings. These settings will differ in the extent to which group identity is made publicly relevant; for example, Mixtec identity may be oriented to explicitly at community events, while in settings such as the workplace, it may be only implicitly relevant.

The literacy class for indigenous immigrants, the focus of this project, is a setting in which group identity is not always explicitly referenced but reverberates through every interaction. Unlike in most adult literacy classes, which serve people from a variety of backgrounds, this class is designed specifically for indigenous Mexican immigrants. The shared cultural background of these students is the very reason they are in the class together.

This project focused on affiliative moments in this classroom, specifically, in the ways that repair, assessment, and metalanguage can be in service of epistemic and empathic negotiations. Many other interactional phenomena can function in similar ways to reflect this intersubjectivity. Future research on the role of interaction in building and maintaining social affiliation could feature analysis of person reference, narratives and second stories, response cries, and haptic communication. Due to the scope of this project, I could not analyze in depth all of these features, but they certainly all occurred in some way in the data I collected, and are likely to continue to be featured in any interactions in this community and similar communities. Future research on the role of social interaction in building social affiliation would benefit from further analysis of these and other phenomena.

The observations made in this dissertation about the role of social interaction in cultural identification suggest that ethnomethodological research can play a role in understanding larger social structures. Structures and ideologies such as racial hierarchies, attitudes toward language, and immigration policies are clearly socially constructed, and the main mechanism through which these structures are built and sustained is social interaction. Everyday socialization practices, mediated by language, inculcate us with the beliefs of our society, and sustained social interaction maintains these structures. Analyzing social interaction in detail can reveal not only patterns that govern our interactions, but also the ways that those interactions contribute to and reflect the construction and maintenance of broader social structures and ideologies. To best understand the root of public discourse, then, we would do well to take a closer look at *private* conversation — the locus of the emergence and maintenance of the orientations that lead to those broader discourses.

APPENDIX

Transcription notation and translation conventions

This dissertation uses the transcription notation conventions developed by conversation analysts (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Hepburn & Bolden, 2013), listed in the following pages. Keeping in mind that transcription is always the first step in analysis (Ochs, 1979), I aimed with each transcription to show the most relevant features of the interaction, with more or less precision in the transcript depending on the analytic point being made.

Each transcript includes an interlinear, word-by-word gloss with relevant lexico-grammatical information on the second line. Because of the orientation of this analysis, detailed grammatical category labels were deemed unnecessary and detrimental to readability. Instead, grammatical tense and number information was attached to the root word with a hyphen (e.g., *fueron* ➜ they-went). Sounds (restarts, response cries, etc.) were not included in the second line. The second line was also omitted when it would have conveyed the same information as the idiomatic gloss (e.g., *sí* ➜ yes).

The third line of transcription is an idiomatic English gloss, which is transcribed to preserve the relevant interactional features of the original Spanish talk (e.g., overlap, pauses, intonation). This transcription method allows the reader to refer to the third line of the transcription for all pertinent information about what was said and how. To reflect this emphasis on the third line of the transcript and to direct the reader's attention to it, the text is bolded.

Conventions for representing temporality of speech and sequencing of turns

[The left bracket precedes speech that was produced in overlap with another speaker

=   Equals signs signal the "latching" of two turns when there is no discernable silence between one speaker's turn and the next

(.)   Brief, untimed pause

(0.4)   Numbers in parentheses indicate the length of a silence represented to a specificity of tenths of a second

Conventions for representing qualities of speech delivery

.   The period indicates falling intonation

,   The comma indicates slightly rising intonation

?   The question mark indicates strongly rising intonation

:   The colon indicates the lengthening of a speech sound; the number of colons indicates the relative prolongation of the sound

><   Speech between the greater than and less than symbols was notably rushed

<>   Speech between the less than and greater than symbols was produced slowly

-             The dash indicates a sudden cut-off in speech

hhh   Audible aspiration; the number of **h**'s indicates relative length of the aspiration

°hhh   Audible in-breath; again, relative length of the in-breath is indicated by the number of **h**'s

<u>word</u>   Underlining beneath part of a word indicates some form of stress or emphasis that was conveyed by loudness or higher pitch or both

WOrd   Capitalization beyond the first letter of a word indicates especially loud talk

°   Speech following a degree sign was notably quiet

Speech followed by the number sign is characterized by "creakiness" or vocal fry

Other conventions

(word)   Text in parentheses indicates a hearing about which the transcriber is
             uncertain

(   )   Spaces in parentheses indicate a stretch of speech that was inaudible or
             indecipherable

((cough))   Double parentheses surround transcriber's notes

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