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Discourse and Identity in Online Language Learning: A Case Study of a
Community College ESL Classroom

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

By

Yueh-Ching Chang

March 2010

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Melanie Sperling, Chairperson
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Dr. John Wills

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The Dissertation of Yueh-Ching Chang is approved:

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I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Yao-ching Chang, whose fatherly love has been my constant source of inspiration, and whose courage to confront what is taken-for-granted has raised me to live and examine the social world with a critical lens.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Discourse and Identity in Online Language Learning: A Case Study of a
Community College ESL Classroom

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate School of Education
University of California, Riverside, March 2010
Dr. Melanie Sperling, Chairperson

Focusing on the process of learner socialization among Second Language (L2) students, this dissertation investigates one key aspect of this socialization process—the role of student identities in a school-based online language learning activity. Although the integration of online technology is gaining popularity in L2 classrooms for developing L2 students' electronic literacy while cultivating their language skills, research in this area has seldom considered the issue of identity in relation to L2 students' participation and interactional patterns in formal online language learning. Drawing on Gee's theory of Discourse and identity, which conceptualizes identity as multiple, dynamic, and contextually situated, the study asked three research questions: a) what are the dominant norms and values that the institution attempts to socialize the ESL students into, b) how do the diverse discourses that L2 students participate in within their life worlds shape their development of student identity at school, and c) how do ESL students enact their social identities through their discursive practices of online language learning, and how is such identity enactment related to the dominant values of the institution and the

discourses students participate in within their life worlds outside school.

Using a qualitative approach that included discourse analysis, the researcher explored a case-study community college ESL classroom that incorporated online discussion forums. Data included records of class and on-line participation for six focal students as well as interviews with these students, their instructor and the department administrator, and institutional documents. Data analysis showed that students' investment in school-based language learning activities was mediated by the social identities with which they affiliated. Furthermore, situated in an institution that highlighted Academic Discourse, the students each negotiated this discourse in their own way, recreating the interactional dynamics and role expectations underwritten by the dominant discourse of the college. The study suggests that L2 students' language practices in school-based online language learning need to be understood in a holistic institutional/instructional context with reference to students' identities inside and outside school and the human agency that L2 student draw on in learning and using their L2 in different learning contexts.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the study.....	2
Research Questions and Outline of the Dissertation.....	6

Chapter 2: Discourse, Identity, and Second Language Learning

Literacy, Discourse and Identity.....	10
Recognition and Discourses.....	12
Political Complications of Discourses.....	14
Social Languages and Identity Construction.....	17
Second Language Learning and Identity Construction.....	21
Language and identity construction within the context of classroom.....	23
Institutional influences on identity construction in classrooms.....	29
Identity construction in the everyday life world outside the classroom	33
Toward a Nested-context Perspective on Identity in Online Language Learning.....	40

Chapter 3: Studying Discourse and Identity in Online Language Learning

Design of the Research.....	42
Selection of Case-study Classroom and Focal Students.....	44
Sources of Data.....	48
Participant observation in classroom meetings.....	49
Participant observation in the class online forums.....	50
Interviews.....	51
Document collection.....	54

Impact of the Researcher’s Social Identities on the Research.....	54
Data Analysis.....	57
Thematic analysis.....	57
Discourse analysis.....	59
Overview of the Case-study Classroom and the Focal Students.....	61
The institution.....	61
The class.....	64
WebBoard in Ms. Jones’s Level Four ESL Block.....	66
The focal students.....	67
Comment.....	81
Chapter 4: Discourse in Context: Rose Hill College and Ms. Jones’ Level Four ESL Class	
Rose Hill College as a Transfer-focused Community College.....	83
The Academic Discourse for ESL at Rose Hill College.....	92
Curriculum Enacted in Ms. Jones’ Level Four ESL Block Class.....	99
Molding students into stylistic structure.....	100
Socializing ESL students into the student dispositions that were assumed valued in U.S. college classroom.....	114
Nurturing the American cultural frame.....	123
Conclusion.....	135
Chapter 5: The Community College ESL Students	
Students’ Perception of Education and Future Opportunities.....	140

Students with the academic goal of getting transferred.....	141
Students with non-academic goals.....	156
Students' Investment in English Language Learning.....	169
Students' conformity to Academic Discourse.....	171
Students' accommodation of their prior language and culture in classroom discourse.....	177
Conclusion.....	185
Chapter 6: Students' Identity Online	
Ms. Jones' perception of the WebBoard.....	189
The Students' Identity Enactment in the WebBoard.....	199
Students' enactment of the student identity.....	200
Students' enactment of peer identity.....	210
Students' enactment of life world identity.....	219
Conclusion.....	234
Chapter 7: Conclusion	
Implications for Research.....	246
Implications for Educational Practices.....	250
Limitation of the study.....	254
Coda.....	255
References	257
Appendix	
Transcription Convention	266

List of Tables

Table 1: Selection of Focal Students	48
Table 2: Synopsis of the Focal Students	67
Table 3: Numbers of Threads the Focal Students Posted in the WebBoard	204
Table 4: Sample Discourse from the Focal Students' Online Written Texts.....	229

List of Figures

Figure 1: The ESL Sequence at RHC	62
Figure 2: The ESL Blocks at RHC	63

Chapter 1

Introduction

Computers have been used to assist language learning since the 1960s (Bultler-Pascoe & Wiburg, 2003; Fotos & Browne, 2004; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). In earlier decades, computers were mainly perceived as tools for drilling language learners in accurate linguistic forms through working with multimedia software, or as resources for learners' desktop publishing through working with word processors or concordancers. The rapid development and spread of networked technologies in the mid 90s, however, have propelled the use of computers in language classrooms into a new landscape. Networked computers now assist language learning mainly through engaging learners in online communication¹, including World Wide Web authoring and browsing, and diverse forms of computer-mediated-communication, such as email correspondence, threaded discussion forums, and online chatting (Warschauer, 2001). This integration of online communication into language curricula has been drawing language teachers' attention. Online communication brings language learners into live interaction with other human beings, such as teachers, peers, or unknown audiences at a distance. Such interaction is consonant with the prevailing sociocognitive view of language learning, which assumes that language development results from learners' language use in social interactions with

¹ Drawing from Warschauer (2001), I use the term "online communication" to refer to any acts of reading, writing, and communication via networked computers. The term encompasses a) synchronous computer-mediated communication whereby people communicate in real time via Internet chat or discussion software, such as Daedalus Interchange, with all participants at their computers at the same time, b) asynchronous computer-mediated communication whereby people communicate in a delayed fashion by computer, such as e-mails or electronic discussion board, and c) the reading and writing of online documents via the World Wide Web. I use the term "online language learning" to refer to language curricula and instruction that encompass any forms of online communication. Particularly, the term "online language learning" emphasizes thinking beyond the immediate context of online communication and encompasses the broader sociocultural contexts where online communication is embedded to engender language learning.

others in authentic contexts or for meaningful life tasks (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Online communication, therefore, is perceived as a valuable tool to enable learners' language use in context. In addition, the various forms of online communication have now penetrated into our daily life, making it impossible to learn a language without learning the linguistic practices of these new communication genres, and language teachers are attempting to socialize learners into these new communication genres through situating learners in the practices of online communication in their classrooms (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro & Cammack, 2004; Warschauer, 2004). In order to better understand how students socialize into these new genres, this dissertation explores this socialization process, focusing on a key aspect of such socialization, students' identities as constructed and displayed as they interact in online language learning.

Background to the Study

Although networked computers have reinforced the teaching and learning of second/foreign (L2/FL) languages within classrooms, the research on computer-assisted language learning, in particular research on how the contextual features of such teaching and learning (e.g., the existing culture of the studied institution, the particular ecology of the studied classroom, the pervasive social norms and cultural values of institution, classroom, and students, students' roles and identities in relation to these, and so on) shape and become shaped by social interaction in online communication is only recently becoming a central consideration. In earlier decades, L2/FL researchers focused more on the quantity and quality of learners' language productions in their interaction with peers and teachers via networked computers to sort out participant structures, discourse

functions, and syntactic complexities in computer-mediated discourse. Their analyses, however, failed to take contextual features into account, and therefore yielded only a partial picture regarding the integration of networked computers in language classrooms. For example, a number of studies (Chun, 1998; Davis & Thiede, 2000; Kern, 1995; Markley, 1998; Sullivan, 1998; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996) quantitatively compared the amount of teacher and student participation in computer-mediated-discourse with that in traditional face-to-face classroom discourse. Their findings indicate a more balanced participation among students and more student participation than teacher's talk in computer-mediated discourse. On the basis of these findings, online communication is said to stimulate student-to-student interaction, facilitate more democratic participation, and decrease teacher control in the classroom, and therefore has the potential to transform traditional teacher-centered classroom dynamics. In addition, some studies (Abrams, 2001; Chun, 1998; Kern, 1995; Pellettieri, 2000) found that in online communication, L2/FL learners produced more lexically and syntactically complex sentences, took more varieties of participant roles (e.g., informant, challenger, supporter and joker), and used a wider variety of discourse functions (e.g., initiating and expanding on topics, asking for clarification and giving feedback on peers' messages)—which are rarely seen in the face-to-face oral discourse of L2/FL classrooms. Other researchers (Markley, 1998; Warschauer, 1999) adopted qualitative approaches to examine L2 learners' discourse in online communication and found that in addition to more learner-centered classroom dynamics, online communication served as a site to facilitate social interaction between students by offering mutual supports to their language learning experience. For example,

Warschauer (1999) found that in a synchronous threaded discussion conducted in a university-level ESL academic writing class, foreign born L2 learners discussed not just the topic assigned by the teacher, but also the academic difficulties and frustration they encountered in their lives as university students, such as linguistic barriers and alienation from the school environment.

As most of the aforementioned studies adopted a product-oriented approach, focusing on the skills and content acquired regardless of the learning process, to the study of online discourse in L2/FL classrooms, learners' online discourse was interpreted as isolated text, independent of connections to the institutional and instructional contexts where online communication was embedded, or the broader sociocultural contexts where learners were situated. In addition, participants in online communication have tended to be perceived as unitary, faceless language learners/teachers, with the variations of individual learner/teacher disregarded. As Kern and Warschauer (2000) state, "To understand the full impact of new forms of interacting in the language classroom, we must look beyond the texts of interaction to the broader contextual dynamics that shape and are shaped by those texts." (p.15) In a review of the research in online language learning, Kern, Ware and Warschauer (2004) noticed that a second wave of research in online language learning has been attempting to fill in the contextual gap by paying attention to particular practices of online language use, described and analyzed in terms of how specific sociocultural contexts shape or are shaped by learners' online activities. For example, studying ESL students' participation in web-based discussion boards and chat rooms in their first-year university writing course, Ware (2004) found that how

students make meaning of their participation in online writing conferences did not necessarily correspond with the teacher's instructional goals. Although many of the students in her study indeed were writing prolifically, they were just adding words to the computer screen to complete the instructors' tasks, not necessarily engaged in active social interaction with their online peers as previous research suggested would occur. Shin's (2006) qualitative case study, investigating a group of university ESL students' construction of the context of their synchronous online chatting, showed that not every learner participating in this online communication was engaged in the same learning process. Each student's ways of using the tools and interacting with peers or the teacher in online communication involved social and cultural practices that were developed in other discourse communities beyond the classroom.

The new wave of research in online language learning suggests that online communication is not independent of the larger sociocultural contexts where L2/FL learners are situated nor is online communication insulated from the instructional settings where the online learning activity is embedded. Teachers' instructional goals and the diverse arrays of linguistic and cultural backgrounds that learners bring with them appear to affect how learners perceive the value of a particular form of online communication implemented in the language classroom and, therefore, shape the interactional patterns observed in a particular online communication and the kind of learning context that gets constructed online.

Despite the fact that recent studies in online language learning have taken into account some of the contextual features that shape learners' interactional patterns online

and the values they give to their participation in online learning activities, there is a dearth of research that systematically investigates the key aspect of identity construction in relation to L2 learners' social interaction in school-based online language learning events. From a sociocultural perspective, learning takes place through social interaction with other human beings. Consequently, learning, especially language learning, necessarily involves learners' identity construction, that is, becoming a member, a kind of person/participant in a social community (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). Through participation in social interaction and cultural practices, human beings construct who they are, give meaning to what they do, and understand what they know. Learning, therefore, embodies the process of identity construction— "choosing what to know and becoming a person for whom such knowledge is meaningful" (Wenger, 1998, p.273). Hence, as L2 researchers attempt to understand the full impact of new forms of interacting in the language classroom, it is central to our understanding to take the issue of identity construction into consideration, asking how L2 learners, referring to their sense of self, make meaning of their participation in online language learning, and what role learners' identities play in shaping their learning experiences in the classroom.

Research Questions and Outline of the Dissertation

Given the pivotal role that identity plays in one's learning process, this dissertation attempts to fill in the gap of online language learning by closely examining how L2 students construct and enact their identities when they participate in social interaction in online language learning and how such construction shape and is shaped by the broader sociocultural contexts where the students are situated. Specifically, the study was guided

by the following research questions:

- What are the dominant norms and values that the institution and the instructor attempt to socialize the ESL students into? How do the students respond and react to the norms and values upheld by the institution?
- How do the diverse discourses that ESL students participate in within their life worlds shape their development of student identity at school?
- How do ESL students enact their social identities through their discursive practices of online language learning? How is such identity enactment related to the dominant values of the institution and the discourses students participate in within their life worlds outside school?

To answer the above questions, I drew from a sociocultural perspective on language and language learning to examine six community college students' learning experience in a case-study ESL classroom where an online discussion board is integrated into the formal ESL curricula. The study was able to show that, situated in a community college that emphasized academics in the service of fostering student transfer to four-year universities, the ESL curriculum enacted in the case-study classroom functioned to socialize the students into the kind of Academic Discourse seen to be valued at the college, inviting them to acquire a specific combination of saying-being-doing-and-valuing that proffered them an academic identity assumed to be valued in North American academia. Despite the academically-focused context, however, the students drew from the social practices and cultural norms valued in their homes and communities to construct the kind of student identity they desired to align with at school and to make it

through the ESL course. Rather than exclusively assimilating into the academic identity that the college/instructor sought to socialize them into, the students participated in Academic Discourse only as it suited them. Further, it was online participation that helped them shape their own multiple discourses, developing and using English in varied useful ways outside the Academic Discourse that the instructor promoted. Below, I briefly outline how I will lay out the study in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

In chapter 2, I focus on the theoretical underpinnings of this study. I discuss Gee's theory of Discourse and identity in detail, looking into how Gee conceptualizes the notion of Discourse as an identity kit that one draws on to furnish oneself as a certain kind of person. I suggest that Gee's theory provides an ideal theoretical lens for the study of ESL students' identity construction in school-based online language learning because this theory, while perceiving identity as constructed in local interaction through the use of *social languages*, also recognizes the *interpretive system* of the broader sociocultural and historical contexts in shaping the local construction of identity, and recognizes as well the role of human agency in negotiating with competing life world Discourses. Gee's theory, hence, allows me to investigate identity construction in online language learning without dismissing the influence of broader contexts on the interactional patterns and discursive practices locally constructed online. In this chapter, I also review research literature that draws on a sociocultural perspective on L2 learning to investigate the process of identity construction within classrooms, factors that shape such construction, and the impact of identity construction on the process or outcomes of L2 learning.

Chapter 3 lays out the research design of the study, processes of data collection, data

sources, and analytical methods. It provides a rationale for using qualitative case-study and discourse analysis as methodological and analytical frameworks for the study of Discourse and identity in online language learning. Furthermore, I give a narrative description of the college, the case-study classroom and the focal students to provide readers with an account of the researched site and participants of the study.

In Chapter 4, I provide an analytical account of the institutional and instructional contexts in which the case-study classroom is situated, delving into the dominant value system of the community college. In Chapter 5, I portray the focal students' identities inside and outside the college. I discuss how the focal students perceived themselves as students learning ESL in the college, and how they drew from the social practices and cultural norms of their life worlds outside college to construct their college goals, respond to the kind of student identity that the college invited them to take on, and make meaning of ESL learning in the classroom.

In Chapter 6, I map out the roles that the focal students enacted in their classroom's online discussion board, linking these to the kind of student identities they desired to position themselves in within broader classroom and non-classroom contexts. In the concluding chapter, Chapter 7, referring back to the research questions I asked at the outset of this study, I summarize and discuss findings of the study in light of related research and scholarly work. I also suggest significance and implications that this study brings to future research and practice in L2 learning online and to issues of L2 identity.

Chapter 2

Discourse, Identity, and Second Language Learning

To examine the relationship between L2 learners' social interaction and identity construction in on-line language learning, I draw on sociocultural theories of language, both oral and written. Specifically, I suggest that Gee's theory of *Discourse and Identity* is an ideal theoretical frame to examine L2 learners' identity work in online language learning and its relation to broader contexts where L2 learners situated. In this chapter, I first illustrate how Gee's notion of *Discourse* closely ties one's literacy practices--the use of oral and written languages--to his/her identity work, which is conceptualized as discursively constructed in local interaction while recognizing the local construction as contextually situated within broader social and historical backgrounds. Then, looking into literature on identity and second language learning, I suggest Gee's theory of *Discourse and identity* will corroborate our current understanding of identity and second language learning, in general, and ESL students' identity construction in online language learning, in specific.

Literacy, Discourse and Identity

Literacy is often commonly assumed to mean decontextualized and isolatable skills of written language use, that is, reading and writing as simple decoding and encoding of text. However, sociocultural scholars of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Heath, 1994/2001; Scribner & Cole, 1981/2001; Street, 1995) have shown that literacy is not a neutral or technical skill but is closely related to "ideological practice, implicated in power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices" (Street, 1995,

p.1). From this perspective, the forms and functions of language use depend on the social practices that written or oral languages mediate and the preferred cultural norms valued in a particular speech community. That is, any act of language use is influenced by the prevailing beliefs, practices, and social relationships in particular social or cultural groups.

Elaborating on theories of language and literacy as sociocultural practice, Gee (1996; 1989/2001; 2001; 2002) argues that one's use of language² does not just mediate activities within social practices, but also mediates different socially and historically situated identities within different sociocultural practices. The notion of *Discourse* with a capital D is essential in understanding Gee's theory of language use and identity.

Extending conventional notions of discourse (with a lower case d) as language in use, Gee conceives Discourse as:

a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role' (1996, p. 131)

In other words, a Discourse is a combination of semiotic, material, and expressive resources which act as an "identity kit" (1989/2001, p.526) to frame one's actions and talk so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize. The person thus acquires the membership of a particular social group or social network. For example, being a student in U.S. universities involves not only speaking or writing in

² By language use, Gee refers to both oral and written language practices, rather than restricting his meaning to the reading and writing of written text.

grammatically correct English, but also embodies the socially acceptable ways of being a student and doing “studenting” in U.S. culture, such as writing to appropriate genres that are recognized and valued by the university (Bartholomae, 1986; Ivanic, 1998), demonstrating acceptable interactional routines with faculty or peers (Gee, 2002), and using tools and technologies in particular ways to accomplish academic or social tasks (Kern, 2000; Warschauer, 1999). In other words, language and literacy learning are about acquiring distinctive ways of *saying-being-doing-and-valuing* that allow people to enact and/or recognize a specific social identity in social institutions other than one’s *primary Discourse*—the home-based socialization that one acquires early in life. Gee calls the Discourses of the non-home-based social institutions (e.g. religious groups, community organizations, schools, businesses, or nations) *secondary Discourses* (1996, p.143). From Gee’s point of view, language and literacy learning are more than the acquisition of a set of decontextualized grammatical rules, but the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse, that is, acquiring ways of saying-being-doing-and-valuing in the various non-home based social institutions so as to become a member of them. Literacy, therefore, is always plural—literacies—because there are many secondary Discourses and people all have some and fail to have others.

Recognition and Discourses

Since Gee defines a Discourse as a distinctive combination of *saying-being-doing-and-valuing* that one uses to enact a certain social role, a central issue is how and by whom a particular combination is to be recognized. That is, human beings must see each other in certain ways if there are to be identities of any sort. A combination is recognized

in a certain way because, for social and historical reasons, there are people who recognize such combinations in certain ways. In Gee's term, there is always a certain *interpretive system* that guides people's recognition process. He asserts:

One cannot have any identity of any sort without some *interpretive system* underwriting the recognition of that identity. The interpretive system may be people's historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions, and rules of institutions; it may be the discourse and dialogue of others; or it may be the workings of affinity groups. What is important about identity is that almost any identity trait can be understood in terms of any of these different interpretive systems. (2000-2001, p.107-108)

Thus, some interpretive systems (e.g., institutional norms, taken-for-granted cultural beliefs, common sense gender behaviors, etc.) must be at work, guiding people to recognize a certain combination in one way rather than others—for example, recognizing a combination as saint rather than mental patient.

Furthermore, Gee (2000-2001) argues that interpretive systems that underwrite people's recognition process are not universal or static, but varied by social and historical contexts. That is, "at one period of history, or in one society, certain combinations result in recognition of a certain sort, while at a different period of history, or in a different society, the same combination would be unrecognizable or recognized differently." (Gee, 2000-2001, p.110). For example, the combination that get one recognized as a saint in the medieval church would, today, in many places, get one recognized as a mental patient. In

other words, we should consider what institution or which group of people, works to ensure a certain combination, at a given time and place, and is recognized as a certain kind of person. Hence, Discourse and identity are ultimately rooted in recognition processes tied to specific interpretive systems at a given time and in a given social group.

Political Complications of Discourses

As mentioned earlier, in addition to the primary Discourse, one acquires many different secondary Discourses in their socialization beyond home. Gee (1996; 2002) goes further to argue that Discourses and the process of acquiring them are inherently political. According to Gee, Discourses, ways of *saying-being-doing-and-valuing*, are intrinsically ideological because they inevitably involve values and viewpoints about relationships between people, about who is an insider and who isn't, and about who is normal and who isn't. While we forward certain viewpoints or values as "standard" or "normal," we simultaneously marginalize viewpoints and values central to other Discourses. A Discourse, therefore, is not just defined internally, but is partly defined in relationships of alignment or conflict with other Discourses. When one's Discourse is in alignment with the *dominant Discourses* in a society—Discourses that lead to the acquisition of social goods (e.g. money, power, and status)—one can easily acquire the dominant Discourses with less conflict or tension. In contrast, when a conflict is present between Discourses, it can deter acquisition of one or both of the conflicting Discourses. Discourses, therefore, are related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in a society. Dominant Discourses empower those groups who have the least conflicts with their other Discourses when they use them. Discourses are harder to

acquire and often tension-filled for those, such as many women and L2 learners, who have come to their acquisition of dominant secondary Discourses without previous knowledge, skills, and values from their primary or other secondary Discourses.

The ideological nature of Discourses is essential in understanding ESL students' identity in U.S. schools. As Gee notes, primary Discourse differ significantly across various social, cultural, ethnic and economic groups. He also uses the term *filtering* (1996, p.158) to refer to the process by which families incorporate aspects of the valued secondary Discourse practices (e.g. school-based literacy practices) into their primary Discourses. Thus, since white middle-class families are able to incorporate the linguistic routines and cultural models valued in U.S. schools into their primary Discourse in the earlier socialization process, children from white middle-class families have less difficulty in acquiring the dominant Discourse of U.S. schools. On the other hand, due to the lack of their parents' access to the dominant school-based Discourses or different sets of communicative or cultural norms valued in their home-based Discourses, early socialization to dominant school-based Discourses are not available to children from non-white immigrant families (e.g., ESL students). As a result, L2 students usually have to struggle more with the tension or conflict between their home-based Discourse and the school-based Discourse than students of white middle-class families.

Indeed, research on Asian students in American schools have found that, influenced by Confusion heritage culture³, Asian students have unique perception regarding the value of education (Lee, 1991; Lee, 1996), and bring with them different home-based

³ This term is used to refer to societies in Asian countries influenced by Chinese Confucian tradition (Wang, 2006).

Discourses from those promoted in mainstream American classrooms (Liu, 2001; 2002; Tateishi, 2007-2008; Wang, 2006). In traditional Confusion society, scholars are placed at the highest point in the social hierarchy among all professionals, followed by farmers, workers, and merchants. Education, therefore, represents not only a path to professional skills that brings financial security or success, but also, importantly, social status and cultural approbation. The importance of education in Confusion society cannot be stressed more in adages like “You can make a million dollars, but a good education is better than a million dollars. You can lose everything but nobody can take away your good education.” Hence, Asian parents regard education as a worthy investment and are willing to sacrifice their social and financial well-being in exchange for a good education for their children. Influenced by the cultural value of filial piety, many Asian students are found to strive hard to achieve academic success in American schools, seeing school success as not only a personal achievement, but also a means to honor their family and fulfill parental expectations to repay the parents’ sacrifice s (Lee, 1991; Lee, 1996).

In American classrooms, Asian students’ communication and learning styles are also found to be influenced by their heritage culture, which inevitably causes them to confront tension in their adaptation to American classrooms. In particular, Asian students’ silence in American classrooms has been a major concern for many American teachers, who tend to believe speaking in class increases engagement and that classroom dialogue deepens learning (Tateishi, 2007-2008). Nevertheless, under the influence of Confusion heritage culture, which places teachers among the five most respected groups by the society along with the God of Heaven, the God of the Earth, the emperor, and parents, Asian students

tend to regard teachers as founts of all the knowledge and as authoritative figures who impart truth. A good student, therefore, is encouraged to respect and believe the teacher by being a quiet listener and abiding by what the teacher says, rather than actively speaking up or asking challenging questions that might threaten the teacher's face (Liu, 2001). Such conflicting Discourses in Asian and American cultures related to the role of teacher and students usually mislead American teachers to see Asian students as passive learners or lacking in the ability to participate in the classroom, despite their being hardworking and self-disciplined. Hence, while Asian students may seek to appropriate the Discourses promoted in American schools in order to achieve academic success, they also have to struggle with the tension and conflict between their home-based Discourses and the school-based Discourses.

Social Languages and Identity Construction

As suggested by the discussion above, Gee's notion of Discourse embodies a sociocultural perspective on language and meaning. Unlike structural linguists, Gee does not perceive language as an arbitrary object bearing unitary meanings within grammatical structures. Rather, meaning is situated in social webs. Words and phrases, therefore, are associated with different situated meanings in different contexts and in different Discourses. From this perspective, people do not simply learn English or reading and writing in English in general. Rather, they learn a specific *social language* (e.g. academic English, conversational English, and so on) to accomplish certain social purposes or enact certain social roles. They learn to read or write in a specific social language to appropriate a specific social group so as to identify themselves as a member of this

particular social group. Therefore, the concept of *social language*, which Gee borrows from the Russian literacy theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981; 1986), is essential in understanding how people use language to enact/construct their identities within particular Discourses.

Bakhtin (1981) distinguishes the notion of social language from that of national language, that is, the traditional linguistic unities such as English, Russian, Chinese, etc. A social language is “a discourse peculiar to a specific stratum of society (professional, age group, etc.) within a given system at a given time” (p.430). As examples of social languages, Bakhtin mentioned “social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, language of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day” (1981, p.262). Although people can be native speakers of only one national language, they speak not only one social language, but several of them. Any national language can be used in connection with several social languages, and a social language can invoke more than one national language.

In Gee’s view, social languages are markers of the identities that one enacts or recognizes within particular Discourses. He states,

To know any specific social language is to know *how its characteristic design resources are combined to enact specific socially-situated identities and social activities*. To know a particular social language is either to be able to *do* a particular identity or to be able to recognize such an identity, when we do not

want to or cannot actively participate” (2002, p.162, emphasis in the original). In other words, the “grammar” of social languages signals or indexes one’s socially situated identities, that is, “*whos-doing-whats-within-Discourses*” (2002, p.163). To exemplify this point, consider an example used by Gee (1996, pp.66-69) in his discussion of how linguistic structures and functions are related to the enactment of one’s social identities.

Telling the same story to her parents and her boyfriend respectively, a young woman, Jane, said to her parents at dinner: “Well, when I thought about it, I don’t know, it seemed to me that Gregory should be considered the most offensive character,” but later to her boyfriend she said: “What an ass that guy was, you know, her boyfriend.” Apparently, Jane used two different social languages, though both in English, to address her parents and her boyfriend when talking about the same story. When speaking to her parents, Jane, speaking as an intelligent daughter of an upper-middle class family, used more formal lexicon and school-like syntax to distance her parents from social and emotional involvement. On the other hand, as a girlfriend being intimate with her boyfriend, she directly referred to her boyfriend as “you,” used the informal parenthetical device “*you know*” and vulgar vocabulary to create solidarity.

The example of Jane’s use of distinct social languages illustrates the multiplicity and social constructivist nature of identity. As mentioned earlier, people do not speak only one social language, but multiple social languages. Different social languages allow us to enact different identities. As the example illustrates, Jane was enacting two different identities (one to her parents and one to her boyfriend) by using different social languages.

Moreover, when looking into the whole chunk of language that Jane used to address her parents, we can find her social language was *multi-voiced* (Bakhtin, 1981)—mixing a form of everyday language and aspects of the social languages used in schools and academic work. Human beings, therefore, do not only use different social languages to address different people, but also mix various social languages to address the same people. The different social languages human beings use to address people in different contexts and topics allow us to make multiple whos (we are) socially visible and recognizable. Identity, therefore, is not a monolithic or unitary label, but is multiple and fluid. In addition, being speakers or writers of several social languages, we design our oral or written utterances to have patterns in them so that interpreters can attribute situated identities to us. That is, one's identity is not achieved through a completely free combination of languages and other semiotic signs or artifacts. Rather, identities are socially, culturally, and historically situated and are constructed in the negotiating process of recognizing and being recognized within particular Discourses. For example, Jane addressed her parents the way she did because in this particular sociocultural group, dinner had become a time when children display public-sphere and school-based intelligence to parents. If the same social languages were used by someone from a different social or cultural group from Jane's at dinner with their parents, it might be regarded as rude or distant. Identity work, therefore, is always situated within particular social, cultural, and historical contexts where the Discourse is embedded.

In short, Gee's theory of Discourse and identity is an ideal lens for the study of ESL students' identity construction and enactment as they participate in school-based online

language learning. First of all, the notion of multiple Discourses complicated our understanding of context, seeing context not as discrete and self-contained, but involving multiple Discourses and social practices that intersect in diverse ways to shape ESL students' identity enactment online. Moreover, recognizing the political nature among different Discourses, Gee's theory situates ESL students in a tension-filled context where their home-based Discourse is usually in conflict with the dominant Discourses of mainstream U.S. schools, such as school-based literacy practices or the academic literacy valued in U.S. universities. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) note "identity becomes interesting when it is contested or in crisis" (p.18). Thus, online learning becomes an interesting site to study ESL students' identity work when we see the students' home-valued culture and school-valued culture contest and exert affordances as well as constraints. Finally, Gee's theory prompts us to see identities, rather than as fixed and predetermined labels, but as socially constructed in the negotiating process of recognizing and being recognized within particular Discourses. Such a poststructuralist approach to identity provides us with opportunities to better frame the construction of identity in connection to the sociocultural approach gaining popularity in L2 learning (Block, 2007; Kramsch, 2002; Lantolf, 2000; Mentero, 2007). It also shares a common conceptual ground with the existing literature on second language learning and identity construction. In the following section, I will review this body of literature to examine how previous L2 researchers have informed us about the process of L2 learners' identity construction in classrooms and factors that affect such construction.

Second Language learning and Identity Construction

As indicated earlier, traditional research on second language acquisition has adopted a correlational approach to investigate the relationship between language learners' production of linguistic forms and the stages of their language development. From this perspective, language is perceived as a self-contained system, consisting of a set of rules or structures. L2 learning is, therefore, the acquisition of grammatical, phonological and lexical structures, and learning outcomes are measured by learners' ability to produce native-like forms of the target language. Factors that influence L2/FL learning processes or outcomes, such as motivation, anxiety and strategy use, are seen as dispositions located within the heads of individual learners. Language learners, therefore, are idealized as "unitary" and "neutral" entities that exist outside the gravity of social hierarchies or power relations of the sociocultural context where they are situated in (see Kramsch, 2002; Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Norton, 2000 for the critique on the traditional SLA research).

In the last decade, there has been a growing number of studies in the field of L2 learning and literacy research that draw on sociolinguistics and poststructuralist cultural theory to examine how L2 learning is related to the process of learners' identity (re)construction that is carried out in social interaction and regulated by the larger power structures in society (e.g. gender norms, class differentiation, ethnic discrimination, or nationalist ideologies) which learners might conform to, but which they may also challenge. Drawing from the notion of language socialization (He, 2003; Ochs & Shieffelin, 2000), a sociocultural perspective on L2 learning assumes that linguistic forms implicitly carry with them the speaker's affective and epistemological dispositions and

therefore indirectly index contextual features, such as the norms, values and the relationships among participants. Since language use indexes sociocultural contexts, the knowledge of a language includes, in addition to linguistic structures, a set of cultural norms and social values which language users draw on to produce and interpret the language appropriate to the local discourse community so as to acquire membership in it. When learning to speak a new language, therefore, L2 learners are re-socialized into a new cultural frame and restructure existing norms, values and ideologies with respect to roles and interpersonal relationships (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

In this section, I review a variety of studies from the sociocultural perspective of L2 learning that have enlightened us on how L2 learners' identity work is implicitly carried out in the daily linguistic interactions in face-to-face classroom encounters, and discuss how L2 learners' identity construction is related to their language learning and literacy development at school. These studies will form the basis from which I frame my research questions for the study of L2 learners' identity construction in online language learning.

Language and identity construction within the context of classroom.

From a social constructivist perspective, identity is not *a priori* given or static attributes such as age, occupation, gender, skin color, native language, and so forth. Instead, identity is conceived as a process of continual emerging and becoming, a process that reflects what a person is becoming and becomes through ongoing activities and interactions with other human beings. In the linguistic practices of the everyday classroom activities, learners' identities are continuously negotiated and constructed through the social interaction with teachers, tutors, and/or peers.

He's (2003) analysis of the discourse in a Chinese heritage language classroom reveals how teacher-student identities are socially constructed in their moment-by-moment linguistic practices in the classroom. Analyzing the verbal and non-verbal exchanges between a focal student and the teacher in the immediate context of classroom interaction, He found that although traditional Chinese values position the teacher as the indisputable authority of knowledge in the classroom, the prescribed expert-novice relation between teacher and student was constantly ratified as well as challenged through their linguistic interaction. He notes, roles and identities in the social space of the classroom are not static, nor are they presupposed to the same degree at all times or readily accepted by the classroom participants at all times. He's study was able to show that through their daily linguistic practices, teachers and students work together to (re)construct their roles, negotiate their social relationships and posit each other's social status in the local classroom community.

Identity work in the classroom setting can affect the kind of learning opportunities available to an individual learner. In a case study of a college-level basic writing classroom, focusing on one student's verbal exchange with the teacher, Hull, Rose, Fraser and Castellano (1991) analyzed the participant structures in a series of lessons on writing and found that classroom interaction constructed the case-study student as an inappropriate talker—an identity affecting the learning opportunities distributed to this particular individual. Compared to the interaction with other students, the teacher constantly rejected the focal student's contribution and was reluctant to elaborate on her ideas in their verbal exchanges because the student continuously violated the Initiation-

Response-Evaluation interactional routines in classroom talk. The mismatch between the teacher's expected interactional routine and the student's linguistic performance affected the student's motivation to write as well as her participation in classroom talk. The cycle continued as the student's interactional patterns in class became not just an annoying conversational style, but also an indicator, from the teacher's perspective, of her cognitive ability.

The relationship between linguistic practices, identity construction, and their effects on literacy learning is also shown in Willett's (1995) ethnographic study of a mainstream first-grade classroom. Willett studied how four newly-come immigrant children were socialized to become first graders in a mainstream U.S. classroom in the process of learning the English language. Analyzing the student-bilingual aid and student-student interactional routines of the phonics seatwork in the classroom, Willett found the four ESL students in this environment were not only attempting to learn the English language but also to adopt behaviors that were appropriate to the social world of the classroom culture. Specifically, the classroom ecology allowed the three ESL girls in the class to imitate aid-student interactional patterns as well as syntactic features in their interaction with peers in the phonics seatwork. Working cooperatively and quietly in the back of the classroom, the three ESL girls were able to solve high-status academic tasks with minimal assistance from the adults in the classroom and therefore achieved a positive academic identity as competent learners. In contrast, seated between two girls, the only ESL boy in the class didn't get help from his female seatmates or from his male peers because these behaviors went against the male gender norms which encouraged

competition rather than cooperation among boys and discouraged boys from seeking help from girls. As a result, the ESL boy had to rely on the adults more frequently than the other three ESL girls to complete the academic tasks. Coupled with his working-class immigrant background, the boy was positioned as a needy student and problematic learner. Willett noted that through the linguistic practices taking place in routinized classroom literacy activities, such as the daily phonics seatwork, the focal students and other members of the classroom were able to jointly construct their identities and social relations. These social constructions affected the learning trajectories of the four focal ESL students. At the end, even though the boy scored the same as the girls in the ESL competency measure, he was not exited from the ESL track as the ESL girls were; the teacher commented that he “lacked confidence” and had “need for longer support.”

Vann, Bruno and Escudero (2006) examine linguistic exchanges between a teacher and her new immigrant students in a secondary “English Learner Science” classroom located in a community near a large meat-packing plant where some of the students’ wished to work for after graduation. Using Goffman’s (1974) notion of frame, the authors found that, in a classroom activity of dissecting pig, the teacher set up a frame for the activity to posit all the students as future workers in a meat-pack plant. However, in the subsequent interaction, few students, drawing on their life world knowledge, tried to modify the teacher’s earlier frame to the science frame, recontextualizing the activity not as factory work, but like the work of a doctor. Nevertheless, their attempt to reconstruct their identity as science-oriented student was regarded as off-topic and disavowed by the teacher. Vann and his colleagues’ study illustrates the powerful role teachers have in

socializing students into a certain identity by initiating frames for classroom activities and control the floor rights and topics. As students are encouraged or discouraged from connecting with their own prior knowledge, from asking questions, or from sharing ideas, their potential to think of themselves as having the skills to be successful students is affirmed or disavowed.

The aforementioned studies indicate that as classroom participants act and react to one another, they jointly construct their social relations (e.g., the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student and the companionship among peers) as well as formulate their identities in the community of classroom (e.g., “inappropriate talker,” “competent learner,” “needy student,” and “future butcher”). These constructions place both constraints as well as affordances in the subsequent negotiations and therefore affect learners’ participation in the classroom community and the process of learning the L2 through differentiating an individual’s access to the material and symbolic resources at schools. L2 learning in the classroom setting, therefore, is not merely about learning linguistic structures through exchanging information with other members in the classroom community, but is also about (re)negotiating and (re)organizing one’s social position within the classroom community. From this perspective, the context of online language learning is not merely a site where L2 learners gain extra access to learn linguistic structures in addition to the face-to-face classroom setting, but also another social space where L2 learners and teachers jointly negotiate their social relationships and construct their social identities. Social construction in the on-line context, consequently, might also give affordances and constraints to learners’ subsequent face-to-face

negotiations, and therefore affect their participation in the classroom community and the L2 learning process.

However, one should be cautious about generalizing the findings of these studies to the learning trajectories of all ESL learners, as the kinds of interactional routines and strategies these ESL learners used to construct their social relations and identities in the classroom community were situated in the unique ecology of the local classroom, such as the gender norms and the reutilized phonic seatwork in the classroom Willett (1995) studied, the particular teacher's expectation and belief system in the study of Hull et al. (1991), and the interactional history established between the teacher and students in the study of Vann et al. (2006). To understand L2 learners' social interaction and identity construction in online language learning, we, therefore, need a fuller perspective to critically examine how particular interactional patterns taking place in the local online context are related to the unique ecology and interactional history of the researched classroom.

Another implication this body of literature brings to the study of online language learning is that although identities and social relationships are locally constructed in classroom social interaction, such construction is profoundly shaped by the broader sociocultural contexts in which the classroom community is embedded (e.g., the social practices and the ideologies of race, gender, class, and ethnicity). As Hull et al. (1991) contend, the belief of the teacher they studied had its origin in the wider social value of attributing low-achieving students' academic difficulty to their cognitive disability. Similarly, the gender norms pervasive to the wider U.S. society penetrated the classroom

discourse of Willet's (1995) study and shaped its participants' perceptions of proper gender behaviors. The local construction of learner identities, therefore, is inevitably shaped by the broader social values and cultural beliefs about what counts as appropriate classroom norms and what social position ESL students are assigned to in the broader social strata. In that sense, online learning is not a self-contained context, but a social space embedded in broader sociocultural contexts. Hence, we should pay attention to how local construction in online language learning is related to the beliefs and values of the broader sociocultural contexts learners participate in.

Institutional influences on identity construction in classrooms.

Linguistic practices in classrooms are not merely sites where social relationships and identities get locally constructed; they are also social spaces where learners are socialized to a particular set of sociocultural values and beliefs, and therefore where they learn to become members of different socio-economic, gender, and ethnic groups within a society. Analyzing the classroom discourse in a *doctrina* class (a religious education class in Spanish) composed of Mexican immigrants at a Catholic parish in Los Angeles, Baquedano-López (2000) suggests that the linguistic practices in classroom literacy events socialized the young children to their ethnic identity and their position in the broader society. In the Spanish *doctrina* class, the narrative of the apparition of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* was presented by the teacher as a way to construct the identities of dark-skinned Mexicans with a history of oppression. Through asking her students to publicly identify their ethnicity (e.g. "who is from Mexico, how many of *us* are from Mexico"), the teacher made her students identify themselves as Mexican. Furthermore, using the

imperfective grammatical structure to access knowledge about the past, the teacher helped her students to link the oppressed Mexicans in the Spanish colonial era with her students' current experience in the U.S. Finally, contrasting the skin color of the Virgin of Guadalupe with the Virgin of Carmen (e.g. "the Virgin of Carmen is white and the Virgin of Guadalupe is a little dark *like us*"), the teacher socialized her students with another collective identity based on skin color. Engaged in the interaction of narrative story thus far, students were socialized to identify themselves as oppressed dark-skinned Mexicans in the Anglophone society. Baquedano-López's study was able to show how students in the *doctrina* class were socialized to a collective ethnic identity and reaffirmed their membership in a particular community.

Although social institutions, such as schools, have the power to transmit and cultivate certain sociocultural values and identities through linguistic practices in classrooms, as human agents, L2 learners do not always comply with institutional goals. Golden's (2001) ethnographic study of adult Russian immigrants learning Hebrew as a second language in Israel explored how L2 learners actively mobilize their linguistic resources to construct their identities and their affiliation with members of the dominant discourse community. Golden (2001) noted that the purpose for a state to teach a national language to immigrants, Hebrew in this case, was to re-socialize the newcomers to the host society and implant national identities within them. Since language is often a symbol of cultural unity and a tool in the administration of a state, learning the national language is associated with nurturing national consciousness and identity. To transform immigrants from the former Soviet Union to full members of the Israeli society through the

instruction of Hebrew language, the teacher made efforts to divest the immigrant students' prior identity as Russian and re-socialized them to the Jewish-Israeli identity, teaching them not only to speak, but also to think and act like an "authentic" Israeli. The students' confrontation with the teacher in the classroom discourse, however, revealed their intentionality of keeping a peripheral participation in the Israeli society without giving up their identity as Russian. Thus, although linguistic practice in the classroom is a site for social institutions to impose the dominant values and ideologies on L2 learners, the social identities that learners choose to foreground in their life world outside the classroom have the power to reshape the institutional goals.

In a similar vein, He's (2004) study of identity construction in a Chinese heritage language classroom in the U.S. illustrates how daily linguistic practices in the classroom can serve as a site where learners negotiate the values and identities that schools intend to impose on them. Analyzing the use of personal pronouns in classroom discourse, He found that although the goal of the heritage language school was to socialize its students into members of the heritage language community, students in the heritage language classroom actively negotiated their identity as members of their regular daytime school (i.e., members of the American community) as well as members of the Chinese language school (i.e., members of the Chinese immigrant community). Referring to members in the daytime school as "*they*" and members in the Chinese language school as "*we*," the Chinese language teacher attempted to categorize the students solely as members of the Chinese language school and distinguished them from members of American society. The students, however, re-negotiated their identity as both members of the Chinese immigrant

community and the American community by using both “*we*” and “*they*” to refer to members in their daytime school. The study showed that through the linguistic practices in the Chinese heritage language classroom, these students negotiated with the institutional goals, formulating their identities as Chinese-American.

The above reviewed studies suggest that schools are social institutions that reproduce certain social values and ideologies through socializing its students into particular identity categories. These social values and ideologies are inscribed in teachers’ cultural models of schooling and transmitted through their linguistic exchanges with students in their social interaction. Nevertheless, linguistic practices not only reproduce existing social values or categories, but also are used to form new emergent relationships and identities (Erickson, 2004). In the process of constructing and negotiating their shared understanding, human agency makes it possible for classroom participants to reshape the institutional values and social practices in which local interaction is embedded. The studies of Golden (2001) and He (2004) inform us that although social institutions, such as schools and the nation, have the power to exert a particular set of sociocultural values and identities on their students through daily linguistic interaction in language classrooms, L2 learners do not always fully embrace these imposed values and identities without negotiation or contestation. As human agents, L2 learners actively negotiate the kind of affiliation they desire to build up with members of the target as well as the native language communities. They make decisions about the kind of identity they desire to enact based on the affordances and constraints of the situational contexts. Identity construction, therefore, is a continuous process of negotiation and struggle

between the ways L2 learners desire to position themselves and the ways the social institution attempts to label them, rather than being deterministically governed by institutional values or school mandates.

As mentioned earlier, social interaction in online language learning is nested within broader sociocultural contexts, such as the classroom, the school, and the society. The relation between institutional values and the local construction of identity in classrooms discussed in this section, therefore, prompt us to consider how school mandates and societal values shape social interaction in classroom, and therefore the social practices in the on-line context through the teacher's linguistic practices, instructional goals, and technological arrangements. At the same time, how L2 learners actively negotiate and refine these institutional mandates in their social practices online also deserve our attention.

Identity construction in the everyday life world outside the classroom.

Identity construction in classrooms is a complex phenomenon that is not self-contained within the classroom context. Sperling's (1995) analysis of the discourse taking place when secondary students discussed the topic they were to write about showed that the identities that these writers played in the classroom discussion were not limited to their classroom community roles (i.e., the roles that express students' relationship to one another as they maintain the classroom community) or their rhetorical roles (i.e., the roles that expressed students' connection to the writing they were about to produce), but were also tied to students' everyday life roles—roles that expressed students' connections to events or people outside the classroom. As such, students' life worlds outside the

classroom community filter into classroom discourse and shape how students project themselves in the classroom.

Some researchers in L2 learning venture into the multiple life worlds that L2 learners participate in outside the classroom community, examining how L2 learners' social identities in the life worlds outside the classroom community affect their access to learning the L2 (e.g., Ehrlich, 2001; Goldstein, 2001) and how learners draw on diverse discourses and identities in their life worlds to develop their own voices, which in turn shape their L2 learning experience at school (McKay & Wong, 1996; Lam, 2000; Norton, 2000). In an ethnographic study of adult Portuguese female immigrants learning ESL in Canada, Goldstein (2001) found that the gendered social practices in which female Portuguese ESL learners participate in their local ethnic community restricted the L2 learning opportunities available to them. Within the family, Portuguese women were expected to prioritize their roles as housekeepers, wives and mothers over learning English. Even if an English class was offered at night, it was not accessible to these women because they were threatened by the frequent sexual violence against women at night. In addition, some of them reported that their fathers or husbands did not allow them to take an English class because of the presence of many other males in the same classroom. Goldstein's study was able to show that Portuguese female ESL learners' gender identity in their life world coerced them to participate in a series of social practices appropriate to the cultural norms of the local community, which, in turn, affected the linguistic resources available for them to learn the L2 at school.

Although human actions operate within the bounds of cultural appropriateness

prevailing in the local community, human beings do not always submit themselves to existing cultural norms and social values, as if there were only one right model of, for example, performing femininity, masculinity, student, age, and so on. Culture is not a monolithic or static entity that uniformly exerts its influence across both its members and the situations in which they function (Agar, 1996; Rogoff, 2003). Instead, human beings reconstruct social classes, age categories, gender, and power relations as they talk and interact with one another. As human agents, L2 learners actively negotiate what it means to be a woman, an immigrant, and a caregiver through daily interaction with other human beings. In this regard, Norton (1995; 2000), and McKay and Wong (1996) have illustrated how L2 learners mobilize multiple discourses and social identities in their life world to develop their own perception of themselves as L2 learners/users.

Based on data collected from diaries, written questionnaires, and interviews of female ESL learners in Canada, Norton (1995; 2000) studied how and under what conditions the immigrant women in her study created, responded to, and sometimes resisted opportunities to speak English, and found that these women's mobilization of their social identities in their everyday life worlds played a key role in shaping their perception as L2 users/learners. For example, one of the focal women Norton (2000) studied, although marginalized and silenced as immigrant, non-native speaker, and service worker in her Canadian social networks, succeeded at some points to challenge the discriminatory practices of her Canadian landlord and the Anglophone teenagers at her workplace by speaking from her social identities as adult and primary caregiver of the family. This case showed that under some circumstances, L2 learners' access to learn or

use the target language was not deterministically restricted by the existing cultural norms assigned to a particular social category, such as a marginalized female immigrant. The case-study woman attended ESL class to enhance her language proficiency so that she could better perform the public tasks in her daily life; she actively used the target language to claim her right to speak and exerted her power and agency rather than subordinating herself to people with more material or symbolic power. L2 learners do not passively enact a pre-given social identity and allow the existing social values or cultural norms to govern the agenda of their life. Rather, they mobilize among their multiple social identities to actively negotiate the social position they desire to occupy in the emergent social interaction including their participation in school-based language learning activities.

In a similar vein, McKay and Wong's (1996) ethnographic study revealed how L2 learners mobilize within the multiple discourses in their life world to assign meanings and values to their language learning activities at school. Investigating four focal Chinese immigrant students' L2 learning experience in a junior high school in the U.S., McKay and Wong found that the focal L2 learners' investments in the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing were selective, and different skills had different values in relation to the multiple discourses that learners participated in outside the classroom community. For example, to befriend his peers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, one of the male case-study students focused his investment in English learning specifically on aural and oral skills. His investment in writing was, however, minimal because he was resistant to being positioned in the model-minority stereotype. In addition, since he had enough satisfaction

from his social identities as athlete and popular friend, he did not feel compelled to develop academic writing skills to satisfy the social and academic school discourse valued by his parents and teachers. Apparently, L2 learners do not reside in a single and monolithic discourse, but mobilize among multiple discourses in their life world outside the classroom to attribute meaning to their practices of L2 learning at school. They comply with some of the discourses and might contest others, depending on the social relationships they desire to build up and the sense of self they desire to project. The multiple discourses outside the classroom can prompt L2 learners to place different values on their classroom activities as well as the kind of identities they desire to perform within the classroom community.

As the Internet has become part of the fabric of our daily life, Lam (2000; 2004) and Black (2006) found that the online communities aggregated by same-interest teenagers were newly developed discourse sites that shaped L2 learners' identity construction and learning experience at school. In a case study, Lam (2000) examined the ethnographic data of a Chinese immigrant teenager's high school life and the discourse data of the teenager's written correspondence with other transnational youth sharing the same interest of Japanese pop culture on his personal website. Lam found that although the case-study teenager was frustrated by the negative identities provided for his "broken English" at school, on the Internet, he formulated a new sense of expressivity and solidarity when communicating in English with his Internet pals. Through his choice of linguistic features in the Web page (e.g., the use of deictic pronouns *you* and *I* to signal affiliation with his audiences, and the use of imperatives "*Go check it now*" or "*Must*

Visit” to signal his authoritative knowledge in this community), the case-study teenager was able to reconstruct himself as a member belonging to this global online community in English and manifested himself as a knowledgeable, valued member in this community. The new position he occupied in cyberspace gave him confidence in claiming himself a competent English language user in the physical world as he stated that his English was much better after participating in online communication with his Internet pals. Lam’s study illustrates that the Internet provided the case-study teenager a discourse site to reconstruct his identity as a legitimate English language speaker and expanded his power relationships with native/fluent English language speakers. Thus, the binaries of online-offline and cyber-physical space can easily blur. Social interaction online can shape offline practices of identification and vice-versa.

As Norton (2000) states, “When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they related to the social world” (p.18). L2 learners do not inhabit a social vacuum, but a world that consists of multiple discourses, and they juggle multiple social roles. They consciously select, juxtapose or realign existing social identities in relation to the social values and cultural norms of their life world outside school, and selectively appropriate school-based language learning activities. L2 learning, therefore, is not a unidirectional process of assimilating into existing social values and cultural norms, but rather a process of struggle where diverse discourses exert power and also interact on the individual level to create alternative, contextually defined identities vis-à-vis the existing discourses.

The above reviewed studies inform my study of identity construction in school-based online language learning as I consider how the multiple discourses in which learners participate in their life worlds can shape their social interaction and identity formation in the on-line context as well as whether on-line discourses have the potential to reshape existing discourses in learners' multiple life worlds.

To summarize, the studies I reviewed in this chapter support the notion that L2 learning in educational settings involve a process of identity construction, that is, a process of becoming a particular kind of member in the classroom community as well as a member of other social groups outside the classroom community. Within the classroom community, identities are socially constructed and negotiated through learners' social interaction with teachers and peers. The kinds of identities that an individual occupies in the classroom community have tremendous impact on his/her learning experiences at school. Moreover, although social institutions, such as school, have the power to assign learners to particular social positions and impose certain social values and cultural norms through the cultural models embodied in teachers' linguistic practices, L2 learners actively negotiate their social identities based on the kinds of relationships they desire to build up with people in their life worlds inside and/or outside the classroom community. Identities, therefore, are constructed and negotiated by the ways that L2 learners desire to position themselves and the ways others position them. Finally, L2 learners' identity work is not self-contained within the classroom community, but is nested in the multiple discourses that learners live by outside the context of the classroom. The social values, cultural norms and multiple identities that L2 learners enact in their life worlds outside

the school filter into classroom discourse and have the potential to shape the identity work within the classroom community.

Toward a Nested-context Perspective on Identity in Online Language Learning

In light of the preceding review of literature on L2 learning and identity construction, I suggest that just as classroom discourse is nested within the institutional context and the multiple discourse worlds outside learners live with outside school, so is ESL students' discourse online. That is, ESL students' identity construction in the immediate context of online learning is nested within the existing classroom ecology, the institutional values, and the life world discourses that ESL students live with outside school. Thus, in my intent to understand the role identity plays in shaping ESL students' participation in school-based online language learning, it is crucial to delve into the kind of institutional norms that shape the curriculum enacted in the classroom, the kind of saying-being-doing-and-believing that classroom interaction socializes the ESL students into, and the kind of life world discourses that ESL students bring with to interpret their school identity. Furthermore, influenced by the social constructivist perspective of identity, I perceive ESL students' identity enactment in on-line language learning as a discursive construction, jointly constructed in the social interaction of the participants through the ways languages are used to unfold their social roles. Finally, recognizing human agency, I assume ESL students, rather than being passive recipients of the dominant Discourses valued at school or in their life world, are human agents who actively negotiate with and have the potential to reconstruct the existing norms and values of their broader social contexts, such as the face-to-face classroom, the school, and their life worlds outside school.

In examining how ESL students' identity is discursively constructed in the participants' social interaction online and its relation to the broader institutional, instructional, and life world discourses, I will draw on Gee's notion of Discourse and identity. I will show how the ESL students I studied were socialized to take on a certain kinds of school identity that reflects the dominant Discourse of the institution, and how the students, drawing on their life world discourses, negotiated with the identity that the school intends to socialize them into in order to accommodate their cultural and ethnic self. Finally, I will frame the students' identity enactment online as a reflection as well as a reconstruction of the dominant Discourse valued at the school. The questions guiding the study are the following:

- What are the dominant norms and values that the institution and the instructor attempt to socialize the ESL students into? How do the students respond and react to the norms and values upheld by the institution?
- How do the diverse discourses that ESL students participate in within their life worlds shape their development of student identity at school?
- How do ESL students enact their social identities through their discursive practices of online language learning? How is such identity enactment related to the dominant values of the institution and the discourses students participate in within their life worlds outside school?

In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology, including data analysis methods, that laid the groundwork for this study and describe the researched site and participants.

Chapter 3

Studying Discourse and Identity in Online Language Learning

Design of the Research

To investigate how ESL students' identity enactment in online language learning is contextually embedded within the institutional and instructional contexts as well as their complex life world outside school, I adopted a qualitative case study methodology (Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 1998), looking in-depth at one college-level ESL class that integrates on-line learning, selecting focal students among the class participants, and examining how the focal students' role enactment online was related to the values highlighted in the college as well as the students' life world outside the college. The focus on a small number of focal students in a case-study classroom allowed me to have an "interpersonal focus of analysis" (Rogoff, 2003, p.58), foregrounding the phenomenon of social interaction among the participants and positioning the cultural-institutional settings as the background to the real-time interpersonal interaction online. In particular, since the research questions guiding the study concerned understanding not only ESL students' social interaction in the local online context but also its relation with the broader institutional context and the life world of the students, a qualitative approach was appropriate because its principles allowed me to understand how the social phenomena in the on-line context were locally constructed in participants' emergent interactions, what the interaction meant to them, and how the locally constructed interactional routines were nested within the broader contexts.

According to Erickson (1986), qualitative research situates the “immediate and local meanings of actions” (p.119) in the analysis of the wider social, cultural, and historical context within which the local interaction takes place. Similarly, Agar (1996) recognizes both the local and societal aspects of social constructions and suggests the need for qualitative researchers to connect the observed local patterns of actions to broader sociocultural and historical contexts. Hence, an important part of qualitative research is a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the researched case, that is, a detailed analysis of the local social activities situated within the broader social, cultural and historical setting with reference to the interpretation of its participants. A qualitative lens, therefore, was ideal for me to investigate the local construction of the class’s social interaction online and its relation to the broader contexts where the focal students were situated while they participated in an online language learning event.

In addition, as discussed earlier, from a sociocultural perspective, literacy learning is about acquiring distinctive ways of saying/writing-being-doing-and-valuing that allow people to enact and recognize specific social identities (Gee, 1996; 2002). From this perspective, each ESL student’s participation in the online learning activity and identity formation is a unique process since each student has acquired diverse Discourses based on their gender, class, and ethnic backgrounds. The focus on a small number of focal students in a case-study classroom, therefore, allowed me to examine each focal student’s L2 interaction and learning in its own complexity and specificity, discussing how each focal student’s Discourses outside the online context interacted with their participation in online language learning, and whether there were commonalities that cut across the focal

students. In the following section, I report on the process of locating the case-study classroom and identifying the focal students.

Selection of Case-study Classroom and Focal Students

To investigate L2 learners' identity formation in on-line language learning, I located a college-level ESL class in Southern California where online language learning was blended in as a part of the ESL curriculum. The population of college-level ESL students was chosen for two reasons. First, in U.S. higher education, there is a tendency to urge faculty to incorporate online technology into school curriculum for economic concerns, such as alleviating the shortage of classrooms and parking spaces (Levin, 2001; Young, 2002), on the one hand, and to accommodate students' diverse learning styles by providing them diverse communication channels to voice their opinions, on the other (Maeroff, 2003). Hence, a study focusing on a college classroom can speak to the increasing demands of online learning in U.S. higher education, especially as such courses are increasingly popular for promoting ESL students' language learning. Second, as mentioned earlier, in educational settings, ESL students strive to learn not only the structures of the English language, but also the academic literacy valued in American culture. At the college level, ESL learners' electronic literacy is particularly critical to their acquisition of academic literacy because academic literacy in U.S. universities intrinsically embodies one's ability to retrieve information online and communicate via electronic media with peers or professors. Hence, the salient connection of academic literacy and electronic literacy at the college level can allow me to observe how ESL learners' role enactment in online learning, which is inevitably related to their

development of electronic literacy, affects their acquisition of membership in U.S. academia. Furthermore, since I was concerned about how contextual features outside the immediate online context interacted with social practices online, an ESL classroom where both online and face-to-face classroom meetings co-exist was chosen, allowing me to gather observational data from both communication channels and to get hard data to see how the values and norms highlighted in the institutional and instructional contexts interacted with the participants' identity enactment online.

In deciding on the classroom site, I firstly wrote to 28 Chairpersons/Directors of ESL programs at universities and colleges in Southern California, asking for their recommendation of ESL instructors who are known for their innovative instruction incorporating networked technologies within their institution. The reputational sampling helped to ensure that the case I studied represented a classroom orchestrated by a teacher with a strong reputation for using technology well in ESL instruction. I got responses from directors of six institutions and had a pool of 13 instructors to choose from. I wrote to invite the instructors to participate in the study and requested an initial interview to meet with them in person to explain the study in further detail. Eight of the instructors responded to my request, five of them agreed to take my initial interview in person and the other three agreed to take my initial interview via email.

In the initial interviews with the instructors, I looked for instructors who showed interest in participating in the study and were open to the methods that I would use to collect data, such as participant-observation, audio taping, and interviewing. In addition, I also looked for instructors whose pedagogy allowed much on-line interaction among

students as well as diverse forms of online communication, rather than just using the web as a medium of homework delivery or drills and practices, so that I could gather a substantial amount of diverse data that documented student interaction online. Through this process, I narrowed my sample to two instructors and arranged to visit their 2008 winter class before I formally collected data in the 2008 spring semester. The class visits allowed me to get a general sense of the class demographics and an overview of the kind of interaction generated by the instructors' use of online technology with their ESL students.

Although both of the instructors whose classes I observed were equally enthusiastic in participating in the study and were open to my methods of data collection in their classrooms, I chose to study Ms. Jones'⁴ class for a number of reasons. Firstly, although Ms. Jones used the web-based class forums as a platform to deliver/submit student assignments as did the other instructor, she went further than the other in requesting that the students respond to their peers' written work online and thus generated a greater amount of online interaction among the students than the other instructor.

Another reason I chose to locate the study at Ms. Jones' class had to do with my own social identities and rapport building in the researched site. As a researcher who is an ESL student with Chinese heritage in U.S. schools, I found myself developing a stronger bond with the dominant Chinese ESL students enrolled in Ms. Jones' class. For one thing, the shared language between me and the Chinese-speaking students in the class helped to overcome the English language barrier that is said to hinder the communication and

⁴ All names are pseudonyms.

rapport building of many ESL speakers. Moreover, our shared identities as ESL students attending U.S. higher education and recent Chinese immigrants in U.S. society made the Chinese ESL students in Ms. Jones' class easy to chat with. They would approach me for informal conversation before or after the class. Using these informal conversations, I was able to build rapport with them and gain trust to enter their world.

Nevertheless, the shared language and culture between me and the Chinese ESL students did not necessarily guarantee me an insider account of the students' world. As the study progressed, I recognized that the Chinese ESL students and I were divided by not only our national identities (e.g., Taiwanese, Chinese Mainlander, Hongkongnese, and Chinese Malaysian) that are (controversially) subcategorized under the ethnic group of "Chinese," but also our educational pathways in the U.S., immigration experiences, career goals, etc. Thus, the process of making sense of their world was still a process of "making the familiar strange" (Spindlers & Spindlers, 1982) to me.

Participants in the study included Ms. Lander, the coordinator of the ESL program, Ms. Jones, the instructor of the case study classroom, and six focal students. In the selection of focal students, I used a representative sampling, choosing students who were representative of the classroom population and provided contrasting characteristics in terms of gender, ethnic backgrounds and academic abilities. Such a representative sampling, although not able to fully account for the diverse voices of the students in the case-study classroom, made up a fair microcosm of the variety of students in the classroom studied, and, therefore, gives readers a sense of what life in the case-study classroom was like to students of different social roles in that setting. The following table

illustrates how the representative samples I chose mirrored the class demographics.

Table 1

Selection of Focal Students

		Class Demographics	Representative Samples
Gender	female	10	4
	male	5	2
Academic Abilities	Above average/average	Data not available	3
	Below average		3
Ethnic Backgrounds	China/Taiwan	10	4
	Other Asian Countries	3	1
	Central America	2	1

Before selecting the focal students, I immersed myself in the classroom for four weeks in order to get a general sense of the classroom culture. In order to verify my observations, I also spoke with the instructor, asking her to name students who were more/less academically capable and students who were more/less socially active in the classroom. A few students who did not wish to participate in the study as interviewees were excluded from this pool. Finally, two male students who Ms. Jones said were less academically capable but socially active dropped out of class in the middle of the semester, and, therefore, were not able to participate in the study as focal students although their interaction in the classroom did inform my initial analysis of the classroom context.

Sources of Data

In conducting this study, I spent the 2008 spring semester (from February 2008 to June 2008) gathering data. I observed and audio recorded Ms. Jones' class. I observed

and documented the class' online forums. I interviewed the ESL coordinator, the instructor, and the focal students. I gathered institutional and instructional documents. In addition to collecting data in these formal settings, to get a sense of the students' after-class life at the college, I followed the students to different places on campus, such as the quad, the transfer center, the cafeteria, the library, and the Learning Assistance Center. As soon as I noticed that the Learning Assistance Center was the place where many of the students frequently spent their time on campus between/after classes, I started to stay at the Center two to three hours after each classroom visit, typing up my field notes, tutoring the students, observing their activities at the Center, or simply hanging out and chatting with them casually. My observation and interaction with the students at the Center were documented as remarks in my field notes and they provided another data source to triangulate with the data I collected in formal instructional settings and interviews, which I will describe in detail below.

Participant observation in classroom meetings.

I observed the case study classroom in spring of 2008 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. three times a week for sixteen weeks. Being present in the classroom allowed me to observe and experience firsthand what the class participants actually did and said in their daily interactions. Whenever I observed the face-to-face classroom meetings, I took chronological field notes to document as much as I could the details of the daily class lessons and interactional patterns, including the topic or the theme of each mini lesson and the students who were speaking during each lesson. Since the study is about the students' participation in the online learning activity and its relation with the broader

instructional context, I was particularly attentive to the class conversation that was relevant to the students' activity in the online forums of the class, such as the instructor's introduction of the online forums to the class, and the topics that crossed over between the online forums and classroom conversations. In addition to documenting the daily class lessons chronologically, I also made side notes on classroom events that I thought were relevant to language use or identity socialization as well as recurrent events that reflected a particular pattern, such as lessons with similar goals, the interactional routines in the classroom, and the kinds of classroom behaviors got promoted or discouraged. I reviewed these field notes extensively in the process of data collection and relied on them to develop initial interpretation and analytical categories.

In addition to taking field notes, I also digitally recorded the classroom activity in order to document verbatim what was said, and how it was said by the classroom participants. Such discourse data was crucial to understanding the sociocultural underpinnings of the case-study classroom, given that the theoretical frame of the study emphasizes the relationship between language use and identity construction. Based on the patterns and analytical categories shown in the field notes, several sections of the classroom conversations were transcribed for data analysis, particularly talk relevant to the class online forums or representative of the interactional routines of the class.

Participant observation in the class online forums.

In addition to the face-to-face classroom meetings, I also got permission from the course instructor to log on the online forums of the class as a guest and therefore was able to observe the interactional process and browse the students' written productions in the

online forums of the class. While browsing the online forums of the class, I took notes on recurrent interactional patterns (e.g., students who were particularly vocal, and the cliques as well as solidarity built up among students) and linguistic features (e.g., use of emoticons, and oral-like or written-like language features) that I felt relevant to the students' self representation online. These notes were kept and stored in chronological order for later data analysis. I collected a total corpus of 143 threads of written text produced by the course instructor and the students in the class online forums. Among them, 72 threads were produced by the focal students and the instructor, and these were screened out for close analysis in terms of the number of threads produced by each focal student and the linguistic features that reflected their identities online. To store and classify the class online forums, I printed out the entire online written texts, and also electronically stored them to keep them in their original formats.

Interviews.

Interviews were important data for this study since qualitative research assumes that actors' own meaning interpretation is the basis for understanding their world. It is advised that researchers should be more flexible in the conduct of interviews, following the interviewees' lead and letting them tell their stories, rather than steering the conversation away from the interviewee's topic of interest (Agar, 1996; Swidler, 2001). For example, in her study that investigated how people talked about the meaning of love in their marriage, Swidler (2001) not only covered the basic questions that she prepared ahead of time in the interview, but also pursued topics of interest to the interviewee. In much the way Swidler did her basic interview, I used a semi-structured approach to the interviews

in my study. I wrote interview questions ahead of time to help me gather the interviewees' life histories as well as background information about their ESL teaching/learning experiences and about general issues related to identity formation and online learning that previous research on these topics suggested would be important. At the same time, I pursued the topics that my interviewees considered important to them, probing them in depth and discovering the meanings that interviewees gave to their ESL teaching/learning experience in general, and to their participation in the online forums of the class in particular. In addition, I conducted the interviews at different times during the study in order to see if the interviewees' perspectives evolved over time. The formal interviews were digitally recorded and all the verbatim recordings were transcribed for data analysis.

I interviewed the six focal students, two to three times each. Each interview lasted for about fifty minutes. The interview protocol covered questions about the students' previous English language learning experiences, their social life in the U.S., their academic/career goals, their access to and experience in using networked computers, their comfort level in communicating via computers, their perspective on attending this ESL class in college, their attitude toward learning ESL online and offline, etc. Such data revealed how the interviewee perceived his/her ESL learning experience online or in formal classroom instruction, and also the interviewee's life experiences or resources outside college that shaped their life in the college. In the interview, I also showed the interviewees a segment of their text productions in the online forums and asked them to recall and provide rationale for these texts. For example, I asked them why they chose to

write about a certain topic and respond to a certain person. Such recall technique allowed the interviewees to interpret their social interactions online and served as a means to triangulate my own interpretations of their textual productions online in the process of data analysis.

In addition to the focal students, I also conducted three formal interviews with the course instructor, Ms. Jones, since teachers have a primary role in shaping students' social and academic identities in classroom literacy events (Hull, et al., 1991; Lewis, 2001), and their beliefs about teaching and learning usually shape the ways computers are used in the classroom to achieve a particular teaching agenda or social dynamics (Sandholtz, Ringstaff & Dwyer, 1997; Warschauer, 2002). In the interviews with Ms. Jones, I focused on understanding her teaching experience, teaching philosophy, the curriculum design of the ESL class and rationale for it, the instructional goals she wanted to achieve in face-to-face instruction as well as on-line instruction, and how she perceived her role in the ESL class. I also asked her to comment on each of the focal students based on their academic and social competence in the class. Such data allowed me to get a sense of her social and interactional expectations of the class and the curriculum that she intended to deliver to the class.

I also interviewed the coordinator of the ESL program about the official curricular structure of the ESL program, ESL students' educational pathway in the college, and the kind of technical resources available to ESL teachers and students to conduct/participate in on-line learning. Such data allowed me to situate the researched classroom and focal students within a broader institutional context. In addition, this interview revealed the

formal, intended, instructional goals promoted by the institution, reflecting the norms and values underwritten by the college. By examining how these formal, intended, instructional goals were negotiated by the teacher and students in their social interaction, I was able to learn the dominant Discourse of the college and how such Discourse shapes/becomes shaped by social interactions taking place in the classroom and the online forums of the class.

Document collection.

I gathered background documents related to the college and the ESL class under study. These documents included: printouts of the college web pages, published statistical data about the college from a national data base, the college newsletter, course catalogues, course ads, faculty recruitment ads, the faculty handbook, the course syllabus, course materials, activity sheets, evaluation sheets, etc. I also gathered fliers, learning guidelines, and brochures that the college distributed to the students when I followed them to the library, Transfer Center, and Learning Assistance Center. An analysis of these documents allowed me a glimpse into the values highlighted in the college and the ideologies embedded in the ESL curriculum of the researched institution and classroom. Such an understanding provided me with background information to contextualize the online forums of the case-study classroom by giving me a sense of the institutional norms and instructional goals, and therefore allowed me to examine the social interaction online in relation to the institutional and instructional contexts.

Impact of the Researcher's Social Identities on the Research

The researcher's presence in participant observation and in interviews always has an

impact on the kind of data that get collected and the kind of story that gets told (Agar, 1996; Nesper, 1997). As Page (2000) points out, “qualitative research . . . is no less a social construction than the cultures it studies, and the mediating influence of the researcher is therefore ineluctable” (p.26). Hence, it is suggested that researchers should be reflexive, constantly monitoring and disciplining the impact of their social and physical characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, the institution they represent, etc.) on the kind of data they are able to collect as well as the focus of analysis they choose, and explicitly stating how they come to their interpretations of informants’ accounts in representing research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Given the importance of the researcher’s reflexive stance, I consciously reflected on how my social identities affected the relationship I developed with the participants in the research process, how the people I studied positioned me in their world, and how the research context shaped or was shaped by my presence in the field.

As I entered the field as a graduate student from a renowned university, and speak English as my second language, my academic identity drew the instructor and the students to interact me in specific ways. The instructor appeared to perceive me as a role model to her ESL students, and thus frequently put me in contact with her students for academic purposes. For example, although I declared my preference to maintain an observer role by sitting on the side and observing the class recitation or group work quietly, the instructor would put me in the position of participant in the classroom, asking me to verify her points in the class, oversee students’ group works, and give feedback on students’ oral presentations. I was also asked to work along with the instructor, helping

the students to edit the essays that went into their writing portfolios in several class periods. As a result of my participation in the classroom, rather than perceiving me as an outsider, the students saw me as an instructional assistant, a tutor, a part of the authoritative structure in the classroom. To make my presence less threatening to the students, I had to turn down Ms. Jones' request of assigning grades to students' work. When helping the students edit their essays, I tried not to be picky about their grammatical errors as most teachers are, and constantly reminded them that I made grammatical errors as they did. When working with them in groups, I would follow their lead, careful not to make my opinions sound "bossy" or take control over the discussion. Despite these efforts, I still felt the students' uneasiness when I sat next to them with a notebook and a recorder on the desk. Hence, rather than naively claim that the classroom I observed was a neutral setting or my observation unbiased, I acknowledge that my social identities shaped the classroom context and the ways that the classroom participants interacted with me.

My social identities also affected the kind of data I collected and my interpretation of the data. As mentioned earlier, my ethnic identity drew the students with similar language and cultural background to approach me for informal conversation. Coupled with my academic identity, many Chinese students, particularly those with an academic goal of transferring to universities, would voluntarily talk to me before or after class, asking about my educational experiences in U.S. universities, about university application, strategies in mastering academic writing, and future plans, etc. While I was happy to share my academic experiences with them, as a researcher, I usually directed the

question back to them in an attempt to understand their concerns and difficulties as they learned English and learned to become students in a U.S. college. It was these informal conversations that led me to see the tension that ESL students had to struggle with between fitting into the academic discourse pervasive in U.S. college classrooms and maintaining their connection with home-based communities—a theme that eventually emerged from my data analysis. In sum, my academic and ethnic identities influenced not only how the informants positioned me in their worlds, but also how I made sense of their world.

Data Analysis

In trying to understand how ESL students constructed their identities as they participated in online language learning and how such construction was related to the Discourse of the institution and the Discourses the students participated in their life world outside college, I relied on Agar's notion of *frame resolution* (1996, p.35) to identify themes and analytical categories in the field notes, interview transcripts, and documents, attempting to map out the norms and values highlighted in the institution and in the students' homes or communities as well as the students' reactions to these Discourses. In addition, using discourse analysis, I analyzed what was said in the classroom and in the online forums of the class to reveal the process of identity construction in the classroom, students' role enactment online, and the extent to which the online interactional patterns reproduced and/or recreated in-class interaction.

Thematic analysis.

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are interwoven from the

beginning of the research study. Agar (1996) suggests that researchers enter the field with an original *frame* (i.e. a hypothesis) and then seek to validate and modify the original frame based on a strip of data collected in the field. During the process of data analysis, the researcher contemplates the meaning that the strip of data suggests and modifies the original frame according to wherever the data lead. After a frame is resolved, the researcher should juxtapose it with several frames and look for the common theme that holds these frames together. In other words, the researcher should collect data from multiple sources that lead to one theme so as to validate the content of the theme and enrich the scope of its application. Through such constant validation, falsification and modification of hypotheses with data from multiple sources, we, the researchers, are able to come to a closer understanding of what makes the local actors' world views sensible to them and give a valid interpretation of the research participants' meaning system in the research representation.

In my study, I followed Agar's concept of *frame resolution*, continuously modifying my hypotheses in the process of data analysis to allow new themes to emerge from the data. For example, informed by previous studies on ESL students' identity formation, one of the frames that I brought with me into the field was that L2 learners' literacy practices online are related to the broader sociocultural contexts beyond the immediate context of on-line communication. That is, students' identity online inevitably interacts with a) the teacher's instructional goals as well as social and interactional expectations, b) values and norms highlighted in the institutional setting of the college, and c) learners' life worlds outside the classroom. Hence, I studied the field notes, interview transcripts, and

collected documents, and then coded them into these three categories, using *ATLAS ti 5.2*, software designed for qualitative data analysis. After reexamining the data that went into each of the categories, I developed further subcategories to capture new frames, and looked for themes that held these new frames in a piece. For example, I studied the data coded in the category of *institutional values* and then subcategorized them into *college mission, faculty/students' perception of the college, stated ESL curriculum goals, and ideal student dispositions*. Studying the data sub-coded in each of these categories, I found the theme *promoting college transfer* particularly salient across these categories. My subsequent analysis of the curriculum enacted in Ms. Jones' classroom corresponded with such a theme. Thus, I started to see the kind of values and norms underwritten by the college, and the kind of student identity that the college intended to shape the students into.

Following a similar procedure, I classified what the students said in the interview into *previous education, immigration history, social networks outside college, and future career plans*, and then started to see *gender expectation, economic status, and social affiliations* emerge as important themes across categories that shaped their student identity in college. This way, I was able to untangle the kind of Discourse and identity that students in the case-study classroom were invited to take on, and how the students, guided by the discourse of their life world outside college, reacted to the dominant Discourse of the institution.

Discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis was another analytical tool to help me understand ESL students'

social relations and identity enactment in the classroom and online. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the meaning of words does not solely reside in the dictionary, but is negotiated in real-life speech communication and situated in social, cultural, and historical contexts (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Language, therefore, is not an abstract system bearing unitary meaning within its phonological, syntactical and semantic structures, but a social object that human beings use to accomplish social acts (Barton, 2004; Bazerman & Prior, 2004; Johnstone, 2002). In real-life speech communication, speakers/writers do not just use unitary language to produce information. They speak/write with specific audiences in a particular social occasion and their utterances are always based on the anticipated responses of their listeners/readers. On the other hand, listeners/readers do not just passively receive information. They actively shape the specific forms of language use by being present in the speech event with particular social roles and providing feedback in specific ways. Thus, language is always imbued with social functions and contextual features. As suggested in Chapter 2, Gee (2005) further elaborates on this sociocultural perspective on language, suggesting that human beings use language to create situations and to build tasks. Social tasks that human beings can accomplish through language include making things significant in certain ways, enacting a certain identity or role, signaling the sort of relationship they have or want to have with listeners/readers, conveying a perspective on the nature of social good, and building connections or relevance.

To examine how language was used to convey social goods and values in the classroom, I used inquiry tools suggested by Gee (2005), such as *type of social language*,

and *Discourse mode* to uncover the specific kind of institutional values and student identity that the college and the instructor sought to convey to the students. I also used Gee's notion of *Conversation* to examine the procedures and interactional routines used by the instructor in the classroom, seeing them not only to convey the beliefs of the individual teacher, but also as echoes of pervasive beliefs of the U.S. educational setting.

To examine how social relationships got built and identities got enacted in the online forums of the class, I analyzed the *written and oral language features* (Chafe, 1982) in the students' written texts online to show how the students used different language varieties to enact multiple identities in the online context. I looked into the students' use of *politeness strategies* (Brown & Levinson, 1987/1999; Holmes, 1995/1999) when interacting with their peers online to show the communicative norms created and valued by the students. I noted the language that reflected the students' knowledge and observations in their life worlds outside the classroom context to show their enactment of lifeworld identities (Sperling, 1995). I also paid attention to the students' use of *subject references* to structure their relationships with readers. My aim was to understand how the ESL students negotiated their identities and found a balance of subject position through complying with and resisting institutional and classroom norms as they participated in the online forums of the class. In the following section, I give a brief description of the institutional setting where the case-study classroom locates and a portrait of students participating in the study as focal students.

Overview of the Case-study Classroom and the Focal Students

The institution.

Rose Hill College⁵ (RHC) is a public community college located in an affluent city north east of Los Angeles, serving about 43,000 students each year. The student demographic of the college consists of 33% Hispanics, 31% Asian Pacific Islanders, 18% white, and 6% African American. Forty percent of the students are older than the age of 25. Like most of the public community colleges in California, RHC adopts an open-door policy, admitting students with a high school diploma or equivalence. It offers lower-division college classes that lead to university transfer or an associate degree as well as vocational certificates and non-credit community classes.

The ESL program at RHC is housed under the Language Division of the college. The program provides five levels of required reading and writing courses in addition to a variety of recommended courses that aim to develop ESL students' English reading, speaking and listening, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar in academic settings (see below for the ESL sequence chart). All of the ESL classes offered by the Language Division carry college credits⁶, but only credits earned in two of the most advanced required courses (i.e. ESL33A and ESL 33B) are transferable to UCs or CSUs.

	REQUIRED	RECOMMENDED COURSES		
	Reading & Writing	Reading	Listening & Speaking	Pronunciation
LEVEL 1	ESL 420	ESL 460	ESL 456	-----
LEVEL 2	ESL 422	ESL 432	ESL 446	ESL 246
LEVEL 3	ESL 122	ESL 132	ESL 176	Level 1
LEVEL 4	ESL 33A*	ESL 415	ESL 136	ESL 146
LEVEL 5	ESL 33B*	Engl 130	ESL 106	Level 2
	Engl 1A -	Engl 133		

⁵ This is a pseudonym.

⁶ In addition to the credit ESL courses, RHC also provides free, non-credit ESL courses. These non-credit ESL courses are housed under the college's Community Education Center, which is a stand-alone building 5 miles away from the RHC campus.

	Freshman English			
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* = Transfer Credit, CSU, UC

Figure 1. The ESL Sequence at RHC

A self-identified ESL student takes an ESL placement test upon their matriculation, and is advised to take a required reading and writing course appropriate to their current language proficiency. In addition to the required course, ESL students can also opt to take one or several of the recommended courses corresponding to each level of the required courses. Students have to progress through the required ESL courses listed in the ESL sequence with a grade of C or better, and then are eligible to enroll into a Freshman English class.

In addition to the regular ESL sequence, a special curriculum called ESL Blocks is developed with the purpose of giving ESL students a more intensive language learning experience through the learning community approach (see below for the chart of ESL Blocks). Each level of ESL Blocks consists of a required reading and writing course that is paired with two recommended ESL courses. Students who choose to take a Block class are required to co-enroll in the three ESL classes and spent 1.5 to 2.5 hours five days a week with an instructor and the same cohort of student peers for an entire semester.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
ESL 420 Grammar & Writing	ESL 422 Grammar & Writing	ESL 122 Grammar & Writing	ESL 33A Reading & Writing	ESL 33B Reading & Writing
ESL 460 Reading	ESL 432 Reading	ESL 132 Reading	ESL 136 Speaking & Listening	ESL 106 Speaking & Listening
ESL 456 Speaking & Listening	ESL 446 Speaking & Listening	ESL 176 Speaking & Listening	ESL 403 Skills Workshop	LIB 1 Basic Library Research

Figure 2: The ESL Blocks at RHC

Both ESL Blocks and the regular ESL classes are required to follow the same ESL course guidelines that explicitly state the course objectives and outline the course content that the instructors have to cover in each level of ESL courses. The only differences between a regular ESL course and an ESL Block are that students enrolling in an ESL Block get more intensive exposure to English language learning and are immersed in an integrated curriculum that covers a variety of language skills, rather than solely focusing on reading and writing. Moreover, according to Ms. Lander, the ESL coordinator, these students have a better chance to formulate an ESL learning community through working with the same instructor and cohort of student peers five days a week for a period of sixteen weeks.

The class.

The locus of the study was the spring 2008 Level 4 ESL Block taught by Ms. Jones. Ms. Jones was a white Californian in her forties. She had a bachelor degree in Photography and embraced her artist identity enthusiastically. Upon getting her bachelor degree, she taught English as a foreign language in Japan for three years, and enjoyed her EFL teaching experience in Japan so much that, upon returning from Japan, she decided to pursue a Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language, and then started to teach ESL in several different universities and colleges around the southern California. At the time of the study, she had been a full-time ESL instructor at RHC since 1995. During her teaching career at RHC, she acquired another Masters degree in Instructional Technology and was interested in integrating technology in her ESL teaching although

she didn't claim herself as a tech-savvy person or a computer geek.

The spring 2008 Level 4 ESL Block consisted of a four-unit ESL33A—ESL reading and writing, a two-unit ESL113—Advanced ESL Vocabulary Workshop, and a three-unit ESL 136—American Culture through Speaking and Listening. Students choosing this Level 4 ESL Block class had to concurrently enroll into the three courses taught by Ms. Jones, and attended the class from 7:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and from 7:00 a.m. to 9:40 a.m. on Tuesday and Thursday for a period of 16 weeks. In the spring 2008 semester, there were fifteen students enrolling in the Level 4 ESL Block. Most of them were recent immigrants who had been in the U.S. for less than five years, and many hadn't had prior schooling experience in the U.S. Ten of them were females and five of them were males. Thirteen of them came from Asian countries, predominately from China, and two of them came from El Salvador. The predominance of Asian in the student demographic in the case study classroom was not unusual in the ESL program at RHC for the college's location is close to a large Chinese ethnic community in East Los Angeles. In addition, among the Chinese community, RHC is known as the springboard to public California universities, and, therefore, attracts many Chinese students cutting cross the district boarder to attend.

A typical day for this class consisted of several mini lessons in which Ms. Jones aimed to teach English reading and writing to the ESL students. In teaching writing, Ms. Jones usually lectured on the stylistic organization of academic essays or grammar rules, had the students practice these structures, and then reported their answers back to the whole class. In teaching reading, Ms. Jones read short essays from the textbooks with the

students, including topics on the African-American experience in the U.S., stress management, the Earth Summits, Native Americans, the Great Depression, the racehorse Seabiscuit, and cross-cultural communication. While reading these essays, Ms. Jones explained vocabulary new to the students; provided social, cultural, or historical background on the issues presented in these essays; and asked comprehension questions based on the texts they read. At times, Ms. Jones intermixed these mini lessons with vocabulary/essay quizzes or the students' oral reports on projects that they conducted outside the classroom, ranging from interviewing people from countries other than their own country of origin, to presenting the result of their library research on a designated topic in PowerPoint.

WebBoard in Ms. Jones's Level Four ESL Block.

In addition to the routinely face-to-face classroom meetings, Ms. Jones organized electronic forums for the class to interact with each other online. These online forums were delivered through WebBoard of RHC, an online communication platform that allowed for asynchronous threaded discussions with designated participants. In other words, the online discussion board was only open to users with a username and password authorized by a conference moderator at the RHC campus. In the conference of initiated and moderated by Ms. Jones, all of the students enrolled in the 2008 spring ESL Level 4 Block were required to participate in the assignment forums by responding to topics initiated by Ms. Jones and responding to at least one of their peers' online written text.

In the spring 2008 semester, Ms. Jones initiated five assignment forums on the WebBoard. Each forum started with a message in which Ms. Jones announced to the class

the topic for the student to respond to. Topics under discussed in the forums were usually related to a theme that the class read from the textbooks or discussed in the face-to-face classroom meeting, including: 1) an exciting experience that one has had, 2) summarizing an important historical event from one's country of origin, 3) what one does when one is in stressful situations, 4) expressing one's opinion of marketing an athlete, and 5) one's concerns and solutions to environmental pollution. Ms. Jones usually asked the students to write a paragraph of fifteen to twenty sentences long and include in their online writing the grammatical structures that she recently taught in the class, such as adverb and adjective clauses, time clauses, and conditional sentences. The students had a week to reply to Ms. Jones' initial message and were required to read and reply to at least a student peer's message with a short, but thoughtful, comment. Their responses to the initial message and comments on the writing of student peers were graded by Ms. Jones based on the depth of the content they wrote as well as the accuracy and complexity of syntactical structures they used in their writing.

The focal students.

In this section, I first present a synopsis of the focal students, whom I selected based on the procedure mentioned earlier in this chapter. Then, to form a portrait of each focal student, I describe in detail each student's immigration and previous education background, educational goals in college, their student role in the Level 4 ESL Block, and Ms. Jones' comments on them.

Table 2

Synopsis of the Focal Students

Name	Gender	Academic Ability	Ethnic Background/Home Language
Charlene	F	High	Malaysia/Mandarin, Cantonese, English
Virginia	F	High	El Salvador/ Spanish
Sheena	F	Below	Taiwan/ Mandarin
Sarah	F	Average	China/ Mandarin
Vincent	M	Below	China/ Mandarin
Mathew	M	Below	China/ Mandarin

Charlene Hong

Charlene was a twenty-six-year old female student coming from Malaysia. Daughter of a Chinese immigrant in Malaysia, Charlene attended Chinese schools in Malaysia and was capable of speaking fluent Chinese Mandarin, Cantonese, and Malay, the official language of Malaysia. After high school, she went to an art college in Kuala Lumpur for one year and then decided to study abroad in Australia, hoping to get a bachelor degree there. Unfortunately, a financial crisis hit her father, cutting off her financial supply and forcing her to go back to Malaysia with the degree unfinished. In 2004, hoping to continue her undergraduate education in the U.S., Charlene came to stay with her sister, who was a permanent resident in California. Nevertheless, with her major interests vacillating, Charlene decided to look for a job in the design field, trying to figure out her interests from her working experience. Since then, she had been working in printing companies as a graphic designer for Chinese ethnic business. In 2006, she married her husband, who emigrated from Hong Kong with his family at the age of two and was working as a police officer for the City of Los Angeles. With her marriage, Charlene was able to turn her immigration status into U.S. permanent resident status. Exempt from

illegal working status, Charlene got a raise in her salary and was content with a double-income-no-kids life with her husband in the city of San Gabriel, which is a part of the Chinese ethnic community in Los Angeles. Charlene's social world in the U.S. was multiple and usually required her to cross different linguistic territories. At school, although English was the official classroom language, Charlene was seen to be close to her Chinese-speaking peers due to her Chinese heritage. At home, her communication with her husband was primarily in English with a mix of Cantonese. Nevertheless, Chinese Mandarin was the primary language she used at work and with her siblings and relatives living in the Los Angeles vicinity.

At school, Charlene as a highly motivated student who always wanted to perform with excellence in every course she took. She started her student life at RHC in the fall of 2007, right after she adjusted her immigration status. Her goal was to get an Associate of Art degree from RHC and then transfer to a design program at one of the CSU campuses. Charlene took her ESL learning as seriously as all the other courses she had taken at RHC. She was placed into a level 5 ESL course (the most advanced level) upon her matriculation in the fall 2007. Nevertheless, she chose to start from a lower level ESL course because she was worried that her English language couldn't meet the rigorous standard of the level 5 ESL. In addition, she voluntarily enrolled in the Level Four ESL Block in the spring 2008 semester, hoping to maximize her English learning through intensive exposure to ESL classes. Being a straight-A student, Charlene expected to be as excellent in the ESL class as she had always been in all the other courses she had taken at RHC. Nevertheless, she had encountered difficulties not only in advanced grammatical

structures, but also in mastering the organizational structures of expository essays. When I interviewed Charlene early in the semester, she was so concerned about the grades she got from her first two in-class essays that she not only frequently asked for help from the ESL tutors at RHC, but also hired a private tutor to help her editing the essays and homework.

From Ms. Jones' perspective, Charlene was "the best academic student in class," who "stood out among the other students" in terms of her writing ability. She even predicted that Charlene was one of the few students in the class who were going to do well in level 5 ESL and get transferred to a university. According to Ms. Jones, Charlene started out the class weaker, but after the initial stages, she progressed to be a stronger student, particularly in her writing skills. Ms. Jones attributed Charlene's progress to her diligence as well as to the fact that she married a native English speaker, and therefore had an edge in using the English language to communicate her ideas. Although Charlene was able to meet Ms. Jones' academic expectations, there was still room for her to improve in terms of meeting Ms. Jones' social expectations. When Ms. Jones evaluated individual students' social behaviors in the mid-term evaluation, Charlene was rated high in regular class attendance, appropriate class/group behaviors, assignment completion, and class preparation, but low in classroom engagement. It appeared that Charlene didn't meet the social expectation of Ms. Jones as she commented on Charlene as a "shy student" and said she "would like to see her participate more in class" in our final interview. Nevertheless, according to Ms. Jones, Charlene was able to obtain an A as the final course grade for she "clearly had the top score in the class."

Virginia Granados

Virginia was a twenty-two-year-old female, emigrating from El Salvador in 2004. She came to the U.S. to pursue a better life because the socioeconomic conditions in her homeland were not optimistic. Prior to arriving in the U.S., Virginia finished high school in El Salvador and attended a university there for a couple of months. Since her arrival at the U.S., Virginia had been living with the family of her father, who was a sub-contractor in cleaning services. In addition to attending school, Virginia worked part-time for her father in order to earn her own tuition and establish her tax record so that she could file a petition for her mother's immigration status in the U.S. Although life was tough, for Virginia had to make her living through a non-professional low-paying job while keeping in mind the well-being of her mother in El Salvador, she managed to deal with these conditions along with her educational goals.

Virginia enrolled in RHC in the fall 2007 with the goal of getting an Associate degree and transferring to a university. Nevertheless, she dropped out of all the classes she registered for in the fall 2007 semester, including a biology course, a math course, and a level five ESL course, because she felt embarrassed and socially marginalized by her "English with an accent." She said, "because all my classes there were no Latino speakers and they don't know ESL students well, I feel uncomfortable, I feel like couldn't communicate or something, and then my accent is not good." It wasn't until spring 2008 that Virginia regained her access to RHC, enrolling in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block with the hope of improving not only her writing skills, but also speaking and listening skills in English.

In Ms. Jones' words, Virginia was an academically capable student who was "smart," "hard working," "on top of things," and who "takes on challenges, particularly with the writing," but lacked "confidence to speak up in the class." Although Ms. Jones had no doubt of Virginia's academic ability, she was concerned about the impact of her family and cultural background on her persistence in higher education. Ms. Jones noticed that compared to most of the Asian students in the class, Virginia had more "life baggage" to carry as an immigrant student. On top of that, her interaction with other Hispanic students led Ms. Jones to believe that Hispanic culture generally doesn't solely focus on an individual's academic achievement as Asian culture does. Hence, Ms. Jones suspected that Virginia's social and cultural background might endanger her educational attainment.

Sheena Huang

Sheena was a twenty-year-old female student coming from Taipei, Taiwan, in 2007. Prior to her arrival in the U.S., she graduated from a renowned college-preparation high school in Taiwan. However, she wasn't academically excellent in high school and didn't do well in the college entrance exam in Taiwan. Hence, her parents sent her to study in the U.S., hoping that their daughter would eventually get into a prestigious U.S. university. Since her arrival, Sheena and her younger sister had been living with their relatives in a wealthy residential area known as the Chinese Beverly Hills, and were financially sponsored by their parents in Taiwan. Nevertheless, like the stories of many "parachute kids" (i.e., immigrant youth living in the U.S. without supervision from parents), Sheena was going through psychological and cultural adaptation to living alone

overseas without the guidance of parents. She had trouble getting along with her relatives, and usually had to work from late at night to early morning in order to avoid contact with them. Her social life centered around school and home. She hung out with classmates in the RHC library and the Learning Assistance Center after class. In addition, she managed a part of her social world in the virtual world. For example, she communicated with some of her friends in Taiwan via online chat to keep updated on the news and pop culture in Taiwan. She also spent much of her time after school reading novels on the internet written by Chinese novelists.

Sheena started to attend RHC in fall, 2007. Her academic goal, her parents' expectation as well, was to get into a four-year university, particularly the University of California, majoring in Physical Science. Therefore, she perceived RHC as a transitional stop where she could polish her English language skills to meet the academic challenge in four-year universities and fulfill some of the General Education Requirements before she transferred.

Having taken a Level 3 ESL Block before, Sheena enrolled in Ms. Jones' Level 4 ESL Block with the hope of giving her English language skills a solid ground. Although her test scores were fine, she didn't appear to be an enthusiastic learner in the class. According to my observations, Sheena didn't always come to the class awake, and neither was she always actively engaged in the topics under discussion in classroom. Ms. Jones caught nodding off in class several times. Sitting next to her one time, I found her to have no clear idea about what was going on in the class. When I probed reasons for her lack of engagement in the class, it turned out that her night-owl schedule had affected her school

work.

Ms. Jones commented that Sheena was a low-achieving student who “passed with a C down there at the bottom” and was not very participatory in class. Rather than attributing Sheena’s low academic achievement to her lack of linguistic competence, Ms. Jones regarded Sheena’s problem as lying in essays that didn’t show deep thought or critical thinking. She also commented that Sheena was a “very quiet” “very passive” student in the classroom. She said, “I didn’t see passion in her learning, it’s kind of like I’m doing because I have to do, I’m going to play it safe because that’s a way that I know about I’ll pass.” At the end of the semester, Ms. Jones was pessimistic about Sheena’s academic future, for her passive learning attitude could endanger her learning opportunities.

Sarah Lieu

Sarah was a nineteen-year-old female student, coming from Zhejiang, China, in January 2008. Prior to arriving in the U.S., she graduated from high school in China and attended a university there for a year. Making much money from the accessory manufacturing business in China, Sarah’s parents decided to immigrate to the U.S. for they believed that their daughters could get a better education in the U.S. than in China. Thus, the family filed their immigration petition through an agent and chose to live in the City of Arcadia where many Chinese immigrants congregate. Sarah was a full-time student at RHC and was financially sponsored by her parents. Her life world centered around home and school. She spent much of her time after class in the RHC library and the Learning Assistance Center, meeting tutors, doing homework, checking emails, and

surfing the Internet. In addition to her life at RHC and with her family, Sarah also kept close relationship with her friends in China through online chat, emails, and social networks.

As a newly-arrived immigrant student, Sarah's goal was to get transferred to a university. Hence, being able to take content courses and improving her English language ability were both important to her. In the spring 2008 semester, Sarah was taking Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block and an intermediate mathematics class. In the level four ESL Block, Sarah was a hard-working and attentive student, but seldom voluntarily spoke up in the classroom. Nevertheless, she was found to be very active in the online forums of the class. She admitted that she felt more comfortable communicating with people online than face-to-face.

In Ms. Jones' eyes, Sarah was "a good student," but was shy in classroom engagement. When talking about Sarah's academic competence, Ms. Jones was satisfied with the progress that Sarah had made in academic writing, and predicted that Sarah would be fine in the next higher level of ESL course. Nevertheless, she was concerned about Sarah's lack of interaction in the classroom. She commented that Sarah would have been a better student "if she could push herself out of the comfort zone, and engage more, and not very passively watching all happen." Ms. Jones had no doubt that Sarah would eventually master the academic writing genre through the training from the ESL sequences at RHC. Nevertheless, she worried that Sarah's lack of interaction in the classroom might hamper her learning opportunities in U.S. classrooms.

Vincent Wang

Vincent was a 30-year-old single male student coming from Shanghai, China, in 2006. Vincent graduated from a vocational high school in China, majoring in art and design. After graduating from vocational school, he had worked for several years as a graphic designer and film editor at companies in China. With his saving from work, Vincent decided to study in the U.S. in order to improve his professional skills. Since arriving in the U.S., he had been living alone in an apartment located in the Chinese ethnic community. Besides going to school, Vincent also worked as a freelance graphic designer and children's art teacher for companies in the Chinese ethnic community in order to cover his living expenses in the U.S. and the pricy international student tuition. His social networks were composed of student peers he knew from attending different classes at the college and colleagues from work.

Vincent gained satisfaction at RHC from his achievement in vocational skills. In the two years prior to the study, he had obtained a certificate of graphic design from the Art Division of RHC, and earned a scholarship to take art courses at a renowned art college in southern California. Unlike the other focal students who planned to transfer to universities, Vincent's goal was to pass as soon as possible the RHC General Education Requirements so that he could earn the RHC AA degree. With this degree, he planned to market himself in the job arena either in the U.S. or in his economically rapidly growing homeland—China.

Although Vincent didn't dismiss the importance of learning English, he perceived enrollment in the Level Four ESL Block as primarily a fulfillment of the General Education Requirements. He was observed to be struggling with mastering the

grammatical structure of English and the written language genre taught in the class. Nevertheless, he was one of the most active students in the classroom. He frequently asked questions in the class to clarify his confusion about certain grammatical structures or homework tasks, and voluntarily answered questions that Ms. Jones asked the class. However, Vincent admitted that he could have maximized his learning if he was able to give his full effort to this course. He was constantly chased after by other art projects, course assignments, and tasks from work, and therefore could only afford to do just enough work to pass the level four ESL Block.

For Ms. Jones, Vincent was a charming student who definitely had showed his efforts to learn, though she commented that he as less academically capable than others. In our interview, Ms. Jones constantly complimented Vincent as an “interesting” student who got some good ideas in his essay, and he “definitely is working hard” to improve his writing despite his essays showing grammatical errors, inadequate vocabulary, and immature structure. Moreover, Vincent also satisfied Ms. Jones’ social expectations as she saw Vincent as “somebody who wants to engage more, but struggles with the vocabulary” and “a student who is really engaged in the topic.” Perhaps in addition to Vincent’s effort to speak up in the classroom, the shared artist identity between Vincent and Ms. Jones also helped Vincent to draw Ms. Jones’ attention and won his classroom identity as an enthusiastic learner. In our interview, Ms. Jones said “I did graphic design, too, and so I kind of understand a little bit about how we thinks than I might understand, like Tammy’s accounting brain. I don’t understand the accountant’s brain but I understand the artist’s brain.” Given this shared background in art and graphic design, Ms. Jones

appreciated Vincent's efforts in striving to articulate his ideas through the venue of graphic arts rather than written texts. At the end, although Vincent got a C as his final course grade, Ms. Jones was very impressed with Vincent's writing portfolio as she commented that "it is by far the nicest portfolio... visually, it's stunning, it's just stunning."

Mathew Ma

Mathew was a 21-year-old male student coming from Qiengdao, China, in 2006, right after he graduated from a high school in his hometown. He came to Los Angeles in order to join his mother, who had emigrated from China five years before the study and was able to legalize her immigration status with the assistance of members of her church. The only child of the family, Mathew lived in the Chinese ethnic community with his mother and father, who flew between Los Angeles and China to take care of his business in China. Although Mathew did not have a job, he devoted a lot of time doing volunteer works for a Christian church located in the Chinese ethnic community. In fact, Mathew's social life after school was closely tied to the church. In addition to regular church gatherings, he spent most of his leisure time in the church. He also taught Chinese language to American-born-Chinese children in the church, and therefore got a chance to use some English after school. People he befriended were either fellow church members or teen-aged boys that he met through church members. Aside from the church, Mathew played sport regularly and met friends on the soccer field.

At the time we met, Mathew's life had only minimal involvement with RHC. Unlike his student peers who had been taking as many content courses as they could, doing

homework in the library, and meeting tutors in the Learning Assistance Center, Mathew was indifferent to getting an Associate degree or getting transferred to a four-year college. He had only been taking ESL courses from RHC, and was seen to vanish from the campus right after the class finished. Although Mathew didn't exclude the possibility of transferring to a university in the future, his primary goal at RHC was to enhance his English language skills. From Mathew's perspective, improving his English language skills was critical to his survival in the United States for he expected to live a life beyond the Chinese ethnic community in the future. Hence, Mathew had been taking ESL courses from RHC since he arrived in 2006. He started with taking free non-credit ESL classes at the Community Education Center of RHC, and then registered in a Level 3 ESL class at RHC in fall 2007 and a Level 4 ESL class in winter 2007. He voluntarily re-took the Level 4 ESL in spring 2008 because he felt that his English language ability was not good enough for a Level 5 course.

Although improving his English skill was Mathew's primary goal at RHC, Mathew didn't appear to be an academically capable student or an enthusiastic learner to Ms. Jones. At the end of the semester, Ms. Jones commented on Mathew as a failing student who was "not academically ready for the next level" of ESL. According to Ms. Jones, Mathew started this semester fine, but "he was not any stronger than when he finished." He didn't skip class a lot, but was always late to the class. He did come to the class with the homework done, but "he wasn't really always prepared or always awake to engage the class as much as he could have." Ms. Jones didn't perceive Mathew's lack of interaction in the classroom to be a result of his shyness, nor did she perceive his

academic regress as a result of lack of ability. She suspected that Mathew's social life off campus, particularly his zealous involvement with the church, preoccupied his time and energy, and therefore impaired his learning at school. At the end of the semester, Mathew passed the class barely with a courtesy C.

Comment

As shown in the above narrative description of the focal students, ESL students brought an array of linguistic and cultural practices as they entered U.S. schools. Taking their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds into account as they came to negotiate their school identity and make meaning of their participation in school-based online language learning required a qualitative methodology to form an ethnographic account that captured the students' broader sociocultural contexts. In addition, discourse analysis was needed to bring the process of identity construction in the classroom and online up-close. In the following chapters, I discuss the results of these analyses.

Chapter 4

Discourses in Context: Rose Hill College and Ms. Jones's Level Four ESL Class

Gee defines identity as “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given context” (2000-2001, p.99). He calls our attention to understanding identity from the contextually specific ways in which people act out and recognize identities:

At one period of history, or in one society, certain combinations result in recognition of a certain sort, while at a different period of history, or in a different society, the same combinations would be unrecognizable or recognized differently. ... Some institution or set of institutions, or some group or groups of people, must work across time and space to underwrite and uphold the ways in which certain combinations get recognized in certain ways not others. (2000-2001, p.110)

In other words, one cannot form an identity or get recognized in any way unless there are people who recognize certain Discourses in certain ways. The interpretive system that underwrites the recognition of certain Discourses is always contextually situated.

In this chapter, I provide a description of the institutional and instructional contexts in which the case-study classroom is situated. Such a description provides a background for us to understand the meaning system of the participants of the study, for it sheds light on why certain Discourses (Gee, 1996)—combinations of saying-being-doing-and-believing-- are more valuable than the others in the case-study classroom, and consequently informs us how the participants appropriate the identity indexed in these Discourses through their interaction in the class as well as the online forums as I will

discuss in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

To understand identity socialization that took place in the case-study classroom, I first look into what kind of institution Rose Hill College (RHC) is, and the norms, traditions, and principles that underwrite the interpretive system of its participants. I argue that although RHC claimed itself an institution of multi-functions, which provides academic transfer, vocational training, and community services to its enrolling students, the discursive practice of the college and its participants suggest that facilitating academic transfer was the most salient and valued curricular function enacted in the college. Underwritten by such an interpretive system, Academic Discourse-- discourse that invites the students to take on an academic identity by calling on them to read, write, think, and act like academics in North America do – turned out to be the dominant Discourse for ESL instruction at RHC. Thus, in the case-study classroom, the ESL students were invited to write in a particular stylistic structures and formal vocabulary, acquire student dispositions valued in U.S. college classrooms, and think with American cultural frames so as to get them recognized as “good student.” I suggest that this particular combination of saying-being-doing-and-believing not only mirrored the interpretive system of the college, but also reflected the beliefs and values commonly seen in the broader U.S. educational settings, such as the assumption about ESL students’ first language culture as an barrier to learn English, about the association of classroom talk with students’ academic achievement, and about ESL as a means to assimilate immigrant students. In the following section, drawing from institutional documents, interview transcripts, and my observation notes, I will illuminate the interpretive system

of RHC.

Rose Hill College as a Transfer-focused Community College

American community colleges play multiple curricular functions and serve a multitude of students with diverse aspirations. Based on each state's legislation, Cohen and Brawer (2003) categorized the curricular functions of American community colleges into: a) academic transfer preparation, b) vocational-technical education, d) continuing education, e) remedial education, and f) community service. The multiple curricular functions are meant to serve the diverse student population that enrolls in community colleges. Woodlief, Thomas, and Orozco (2003) state that among the more than 2.5 million students across California's 109 community colleges, some students come with the goal of transferring to four-year college by taking lower division collegiate studies, some come with the goal of earning vocational certificates or developing skills to work in a particular industry, some come for basic skill remediation or study for U.S. citizenship, and still others, though they have completed Bachelor's degrees, come back to fill in courses in order to pursue new paths in their life. Hence, rather than completely focusing on research and academic development as the other sections of higher education institutions do, American community colleges are designed to serve the multiplicity of student needs by providing various curricular functions.

To align with the common missions shared by community colleges in the U.S., RHC portrays itself a multi-functional institution, which provides academic transfer, vocational training, and community services to its enrolling students. On the school website, the mission of the college is stated as the following:

The mission of [Rose Hill College] is successful student learning. The College provides high-quality, academically rigorous instruction in a comprehensive transfer and vocational curriculum, as well as learning activities designed to improve the economic condition and quality of life of the diverse communities within the College service area.

At [Rose Hill College] we serve our students by:

- Offering courses and programs which reflect academic excellence and professional integrity,
- Challenging them to participate fully in the learning process by encouraging them to be responsible for their own academic success,
- Fostering a creative learning environment that is technologically challenging and intellectually and culturally stimulating,
- Recognizing them as individuals who may require diverse and flexible learning opportunities, and
- Encouraging and supporting continuous learning and professional development in those who serve our students: faculty, staff and managers.

Moreover, in the ESL faculty recruitment advertisement, the college is portrayed as follows:

[Rose Hill College] celebrates a dynamic community of learners representing global diversity. Our college serves a diverse community of

over 29,000 students who come from nearby high schools and far-off continents. Whether from near or far, our students seek our offerings with over 60 academic programs and 70 vocational certifications. High-school students and senior citizens, newly arrived immigrants, and individuals with advanced degrees, transfer-bound learners, and those seeking job skills programs all find their place on our campus. We are proud of over 80 years of service to the community and look forward to a 21st century of continuing excellence and innovation.

Aligning with the common missions shared by the American community colleges, RHC portrays itself as a multi-functional institution that serves students who attempt to transfer to four-year universities, adults who wish to develop vocational skills, and local residents who would like to enrich their life by participating in cultural and recreational events offered by the college. It is depicted as an institution that not only offers academically rigorous instruction, but also fosters intellectual creativity and celebrates cultural diversity. Despite this portrayal in its public statements, however, the discursive practices of the college and its participants suggest that facilitating academic transfer is the most salient and valued curricular function enacted in the college.

Statistically, RHC is one of the top California public community colleges that transfer the most students to four-year universities in California. Data from California Postsecondary Education Commission indicates that in the 2007 to 2008 academic year, among the 109 Californian public community colleges, RHC ranked among the top 5 community colleges that transfer the most students to the public four-year universities in

California. Furthermore, according to statistical data collected by the California Community College Chancellor's office, following the cohort of students from fall 2003 to spring 2006, 41.4% of RHC's enrolling students became transfer-prepared, higher than the 35.6% state average, and the 30% rate achieved by a nearby community college. These statistics indicate that RHC is doing an extraordinary job in transferring students to public four-year universities in California.

While statistical data certainly have a role in telling what kind of institution RHC is, from a deterministic world view, one can argue that RHC's remarkable achievement in facilitating academic transfer has its roots in its location in an affluent area, recruiting students of higher socio-economical status who tend to be more academically successful than those of lower socio-economical status. Nevertheless, from a constructivist viewpoint, there is an alternative perspective to interpret RHC's achievement in transferring community college students to four-year universities. Rather than perceiving RHC's achievement in facilitating academic transfer as the sole result of social reproduction, I argue that through the discursive construction of the college and its participants, RHC is also shaped by its participants as a particular kind of institution. Such discursive practices invite its participants to fashion themselves in particular ways to form and sustain their identity as members of a transfer-focused college, making facilitating academic transfer and cultivating academically capable students a more salient curricular function in RHC than the others, such as vocational training and community services.

The discourse of RHC as a transfer-focused institution is constructed through

various discursive practices by the college as well as by its participants. First of all, the college's Transfer Center, which provides students with transfer-related information and orchestrates various transfer-related activities on campus, such as transfer workshops, university representative visits, university tours, and transfer counseling, is kept highly visible to its students, faculty, and those who are interested in enrolling the college. Specifically, a half-page Transfer Center advertisement is placed on the fourth page of the college catalogue, right next to enrollment instructions, a must-read section for students, particularly newcomers. Moreover, on the college's official website, a link to the Transfer Center is brought to the immediate attention of its web visitors: When accessing the main page of RHC's web site, a web visitor can get a direct link to the Transfer Center, which is highlighted as one of the three "Featured Sites" on the main page along with the Human Resource and the Online Learning System. Since the catalogue and the main page represent the college's public image, placing the Transfer Center, rather than the college's Career Center or the Community Education Center, in the spotlight indexes the college's priority of serving transfer-bound students and boosting its public image as a transfer-focused college.

In addition to the high visibility of the Transfer Center, transfer-related activities appear to receive high profile on campus. For example, in the upcoming events listed in the weekly campus newsletter, there were ten events scheduled between March 20, 2008, and March 26, 2008, and four of them were transfer-related events, such as University Representative Visits. Furthermore, while I was doing fieldwork on campus, I witnessed University Day, an event where university representatives around California came to the

college, set up booths and tables at the quad in front of the college's student center, and met face-to-face with students who were interested in transferring to four-year institutions. Even though I was a visitor who was primarily interested in what happened in the classroom rather than in academic transfer of the college, I couldn't help but notice this particular transfer-related event. The whole campus was decorated with showy banners printed with the slogan "Think Transfer!" Catchy posters that promoted University Day were seen everywhere at the campus. I also saw a large number of students stopping by the booths, asking questions and obtaining documents and flyers prepared by the representatives from varied universities. In a word, I couldn't ignore this event because it appeared to be the hottest student event that I observed while I was at campus. While such transfer-related events were meant to dispersing transfer information to the students, it is noteworthy that through giving these events high profiles at the campus, the college calls for its students, whether enrolling with the intention of academic transfer or not, to think transfer, to think about transfer, and to think like a transfer-bound student would do.

In addition to its tacit discursive practices (e.g., the organization of its website), RHC is not shy from explicitly announcing itself as a transfer-focused college to the public and appears to take special pride in doing so. As stated in the web page of the Transfer Center, RHC claims that it:

Has services and programs that help students transfer to four-year colleges and universities. In fact, [RHC] is one of the top ranked California Community Colleges transferring students to the CSU and UC systems.

Likewise, in the ESL faculty recruitment advertisement, RHC states the following as one

of the reasons that the institution attracts potential faculty:

[RHC] is continuing to build its tradition of excellence in its academic programs, leading to high student transfer rate and the success of its students in their four-year college and university experiences.

The college's efforts to implicitly and explicitly project itself as a transfer-focused institution that offers rigorous academic instruction appear to be taken up by its participants. Within the Chinese immigrant community, word-of-mouth says RHC is the springboard to prestigious universities in southern California. Such a reputation draws many transfer-bound students from across the district's boundaries in order to have the opportunity that RHC promises of getting into four-year universities. As Charlene, who was enthusiastic about getting into a graphic design program at CSU, explained to me in our interview about why she chose to come to RHC rather than another community college in her neighborhood,

I heard that [RHC] got higher credit than Lake (the community college that serves her neighborhood). People say that Lake is easy to pass, so I choose [RHC].

In a similar vein, RHC's reputation of transferring students to four-year universities in California attracted Sarah, who recently came from China with her family to pursue her higher education in the U.S. Relying on an immigration agent who submitted the family's immigration petition and oriented the family to the education and living environment in California, Sarah was advised by the agent to consider two institutions in southern California as her gateway to higher education in the U.S. She said in the interview:

[My family and I] came here and wanted to find a college or university. Because I didn't take the test, like TOEFL and first we find the Southgate CSU because they have an ESL program and then if you pass [their ESL program] and get a good score, you can go to their university. And another one is here (RHC). Here is, uh, how can I say, because here my agent told me I can transfer to whatever university I want, so I chose to come here rather than Southgate CSU.

As indicated in the statements made by Charlene and Sarah, students who are serious about transferring to four-year universities not only recognize RHC as a transfer-focused institution that provides rigorous instruction, but also identify themselves as members of such a college.

RHC's reputation as a transfer-focused college is also taken up by the faculty. Responding to a question about ESL services, Ms. Lander, the ESL coordinator at RHC, focused on this reputation:

YC: Then, I would like know more about the students. How do the students know about the ESL services provided by RHC?

Ms. Lander: I have no idea, they probably heard about it from each other, that would be an interesting question if you go back to [the students] and ask them how they heard about us, because among the community colleges, I think we have a good reputation, you know, hard, I mean rigorous, I mean serious, I think we are a serious program, we're just..

YC: Yes, I heard the transfer rate of RHC is really good.

Ms. Lander: Yes. In fact, our district, the RHC district doesn't include a lot of the areas that the students come from. ... I really don't know why, we have a good reputation, but people that I know have been in [Lake College] say [Lake] has a lot of Hispanic students. So like the Asians who live down there, they don't want to go there. They come here. So here the ESL students that you see in classes are like 80 or 90 percent Asians.

Interestingly, Ms. Lander, not only recognized RHC as a college with a good reputation in transferring students to four-year universities, but also identified herself as a member of the kind of college that offers serious and rigorous academic programs as she unconsciously used the first person plural in her statement "we have a good reputation," "we are a serious program." As such, participants of RHC recognize and take up the discourse about RHC as a transfer-focused college. Moreover, as they identify themselves as faculty/student of the college that provides academically rigorous instruction, they corroborate and co-construct such discourse.

Gee suggests that

One cannot have an identity of any sort without some interpretive system underwriting the recognition of that identity. The interpretive system may be people's historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions, and rules of an institution; it may be the discourse and dialogue of others; or it may be the workings of affinity groups.

(2000-2001, pp.107-108)

At RHC, the interpretive system at work is the discourse co-constructed by the college and its participants that “we are a transfer-focused college that provides academically rigorous instruction.” Underwritten by the interpretive system, certain kind of practices, values, and dispositions are recognized by the participants of the institution as more valuable than the others, or taken for granted as the norms in the classroom. In the following section, I will discuss, within this particular interpretive system of RHC, how the curriculum goals of ESL are interpreted, and how such institutional discourse shapes the enacted curriculum in the case-study classroom so that certain kinds of language use are regarded as more valuable than others and certain combinations of student traits are regarded as the norms.

The Academic Discourse for ESL at Rose Hill College

Within the interpretive system that RHC is a transfer-focused institution that provides academically rigorous instruction, ESL is interpreted as a transition to Freshmen English and college-level content classes, rather than other possibilities such as ESL for General Education Degree, ESL for vocational skills, or ESL for functional literacy in the U.S. In other words, the ESL curriculum offered at RHC is assumed and designed to prepare ESL students for their future academic life in Freshmen English and college-level content courses, focusing on teaching ESL students to read and write college-level academic texts as well as shaping them to act and think like an American⁷ college student.

⁷ In this chapter, I use "U.S." to refer to the geographic boundary of the United States of America, and "American" to refer to white middle class Americans who speak English as their native language. Thus, the term “American college students” suggests the normative white-middle-class perception of college students, and the term "American culture" suggests the mainstream cultural norms of the white middle class in the U.S.

As indicated earlier, Gee (1996) defines a Discourse as a particular combination of saying-being-doing-and-believing that allows people to enact and/or recognize a specific identity. He also argues that school is one of the non-home-based social institutions where one develops one or more *secondary Discourses*, and the mastery of a secondary Discourse means taking on an identity that transcends the family or primary socializing group (1996, p.142-143). In this section, I argue that the ESL curriculum enacted at RHC functions to socialize ESL students into an “Academic Discourse,” calling on them to read, write, think, and act like academics, and therefore inviting them to take on an academic identity. In the following, I discuss the Academic Discourse embedded in RHC’s ESL curriculum through an analysis of the departmental documents and spoken words of the ESL program administrator at RHC. I suggest that the Academic Discourse embedded in the ESL curriculum at RHC is taken for granted by its participants because it is situated within the interpretive system that “RHC is a transfer-focused college.”

The goals of the ESL curriculum at RHC were explicitly articulated by the ESL program administrator and institutional documents, such as the college’s catalogue, and the ESL program’s faculty handbook. When asked about the overall curriculum goals of the ESL program, Ms. Lander, the ESL coordinator of RHC, answered without hesitation:

Since we are preparing students for Freshmen English and for other college classes, and for transfer, a lot of what we do is geared toward the universities. ... So basically the goals of the class are to learn the writing skills for an academic setting, it’s basically for academic settings, some

teachers do something a little bit different, but basically it's really the standard expository essay, and to get them into class at college level, and so more and more we're doing library and Internet research, that's a major focus of these classes, too.

Ms. Lander's statement is undergirded and framed by the assumption that the ESL curriculum at RHC is "preparing students for Freshmen English and for other college classes, and for transfer." Such a taken-for-granted assumption implicitly privileges students enrolling in RHC with the intention of getting transferred, and marginalizes students enrolling in RHC with the interests of advancing their English language skills for vocational needs or everyday literacy. As I will show in the next chapter, students enrolling with an academic goal of getting transferred to four-year universities appeared to respond to the ESL learning experience in Ms. Jones' classroom differently from those enrolling with non-academic goals. Furthermore, Ms. Lander's statement pinpoints the institutional principle of an academically-emphasized ESL curriculum that aims to develop ESL students' academic identity through the acquisition of academic language skills so that they will be able to succeed in college-level content courses in general, and the Freshman English course in particular, a must-take course for all students who wish to transfer to four-year universities. This curriculum principle is situated and taken for granted within the RHC interpretive system. Hence, speaking from the position of a departmental administrator, Ms. Lander was in conversation with the values highlighted by RHC and assumed that "learning the writing skills for academic setting" is the primary and normative curriculum goal in every ESL classroom at RHC. Finally, she reflected the

view of “the standard expository essay” (which she later on defined as a five paragraph essay with an introduction, a thesis statement, and body paragraphs with topic sentences, a conclusion, and a fair number of transition words) as a taken-for-granted norm for every ESL classroom at RHC. In responding to the institutional value system, which highlights transferring students to four-year universities, Ms. Lander’s discourse is the Academic Discourse of RHC. It is a specific kind of language use (i.e., academic language) and a specific kind of student disposition (i.e., students of academic orientation) that the ESL curriculum is assumed to shape.

An examination of the catalogue description and the specific language skills enlisted in the ESL course guidelines available to ESL students and faculty at RHC further reveals the notion of Academic Discourse embedded in Ms. Lander’s assertions. As indicated in the college’s catalogue and the ESL Faculty Handbook, all levels of the required ESL courses are portrayed as developing English language skills for academic purposes for students who wish to enter college-level content courses. The following is the catalogue description for each level of the required ESL courses:

Level 1: Development of reading and writing skills for academic purposes. Readings in short essays and fiction; written practice in sentence patterns, paragraphs, and short essays.

Level 2: Intensive practice in basic English sentence structure for students who wish to prepare for college-level work. Introduction to spelling, punctuation, vocabulary development and English writing conventions.

Level 3: Development of grammar and writing skills for academic purposes. Reading of low-intermediate fiction and non-fiction; written practice in sentence patterns and compositions.

Level 4: Reading and composition to prepare students for college classes. Practice in advanced sentence structure; methods of paragraph and essay development; reading of college-level material.

Level 5: Readings in college-level texts including fiction and non-fiction; methods of essay and annotated paper development. Designed to prepare students for success in English composition classes.

Echoing the institutional value of facilitating academic transfer, the catalogue description indicates that through all levels of ESL courses, furnishing ESL students with the reading and writing skills for college-level academic texts is the primary curriculum function.

Fulfilling the ESL sequences means achieving “success in English composition classes,” as indicated in the catalogue description of the level five ESL.

In the ESL Faculty Handbook, the course guidelines outline the specific course content for each level of ESL courses, and therefore allow us to delve into the particular kind of words and deeds that ESL students are expected to acquire. For example, according to the guidelines, the level 4 ESL 33A (the guideline that the case-study classroom follows) is supposed to cover the following course content:

Reading and Vocabulary:

- Read college-level texts, both fiction and non-fiction;

- Recognize the whole range of transition signals and understand the relationships they indicate;
- use these library resources—the Reference Room, the on-line catalogs for books and periodicals;
- understand inferred meanings;
- study college-level vocabulary.

Writing:

- Write academic essays of one to several paragraphs including introduction, body, and conclusion;
- Use process techniques, including generating ideas, outlining, and revising;
- Express relationships between ideas using coordinating and subordination;
- Use a variety of sentence structures;
- Use generally appropriate academic English vocabulary.

Grammar:

- Use correctly all coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, and conjunctive adverbs;

- Use correctly all tenses and verb forms, including perfects, conditionals, and modals.

Success in level 4 ESL, then, means that an ESL student reads college-level texts following a certain kind of thinking model (e.g. drawing inferred meanings from the text), uses the valued vocabulary in this context different from informal or “daily” vocabulary, writes essays in a particular style and format identified as academic, uses resources from the library rather than resources of any other kind to support their opinions, and uses certain kinds of grammatical structures (e.g. compound and complex sentences rather than simple sentences). These expectations, once again, highlight the Academic Discourse embedded in the ESL curriculum at RHC, showing that within the interpretive system that “we are a transfer-focused college,” certain kinds of language use, thinking models, and student behaviors are recognized as more valuable than others and institutionalized as the norm. Hence, socializing ESL students to the Academic Discourse, that is, cultivating them to read, write, think, and act as RHC perceives academics to do, becomes the primary function of the ESL curriculum at RHC.

Gee (2000-2001) points out that “some institution or set of institutions, or some group or groups of people, must work across time and space to underwrite and uphold the ways in which certain combinations get recognized in certain ways not others” (2000-2001, p.110). The above analyses show that there is an Academic Discourse embedded in the ESL curriculum at RHC, attempting to shaping ESL students not only to read and write in certain kinds of academic language, but also to think and act like a certain kind of academic individual. This combination of words and deeds is recognized as the norm

and standard because it is underwritten by the institution operating in the discourse that “we are a transfer-focused college.” Situated within this discourse, the ESL curriculum at RHC is interpreted as “preparing students for Freshmen English and for other college classes, and for transfer” and serves to socialize ESL students into the Academic Discourse through acquiring a specific way of language use and certain kinds of student dispositions. As we will see in the following discussion, the perception of Academic Discourse penetrated into the daily practices in the case-study classroom, shaping the curriculum that Ms. Jones attempted to transmit to her ESL students.

Curriculum Enacted in Ms. Jones’ Level Four ESL Block Class

The curriculum enacted in Ms. Jones’ Level Four ESL Block echoed the values highlighted in the college by (a) furnishing the students who were underprepared in English language skills with the academic language seen to meet the needs of college-level courses, and (b) socializing the students who barely had classroom experience in the U.S. to the normative student behaviors and learning traits valued in U.S. college classrooms. Yet Ms. Jones went beyond the institutional expectation to nurture ESL students’ American identity through promulgating American culture to the students who were foreign to the U.S. An analysis of the course documents, interview transcripts, classroom discourse, and field notes taken during the class sessions reveals three themes that portray the curriculum Ms. Jones attempted to transmit in her Level Four ESL Block—molding ESL students into a particular stylistic structure that is assumed to represent the writing of the U.S. academy, socializing ESL students into the student disposition that Ms. Jones assumed to be valued in U.S. college classrooms, and

nurturing American cultural frames.

Molding students into stylistic structure.

In response to the Academic Discourse underwritten in the ESL curriculum guidelines, Ms. Jones interpreted the development of students' academic language skills as molding them to write in a particular language variety, using designated stylistic format, grammatical structures, and vocabulary so as to shape them into an academically capable student. When asked about the curriculum goal of the Level 4 ESL Block, she explicitly stated:

This is an academic writing course. English 1A is academic writing, so [the students] transition from level two to level three is kind of the transition from just writing to a more academic writing, although in each case, they are developing a topic sentence with supporting points, so we are following academic formats from the beginning. ... The purpose of the Level Four class is to help the students transition from writing paragraphs into writing essays, predominantly narrative based essays ... the idea here is that by the end of the semester, [the students] can write an essay that develops a single thesis statement with multiple examples and do it grammatically, you know, without too many mistakes, then we have succeeded.

Situated within a system that privileges and promotes Academic Discourse, including English for academic purposes, Ms. Jones naturally took for granted that the Level Four ESL Block was an academic writing course targeting transition students to Freshmen

English but also appeared to take for granted that all students in the course had academic goals. Hence, what Ms. Jones attempted to promote in the classroom was not written English of just any kind, but a certain kind of written language which consists of a particular stylistic format, grammatical structures, and vocabulary.

In Gee's term, Ms. Jones promoted a particular *social language* so as to shape the students into a certain social identity. As mentioned earlier, Gee defines a Discourse as a particular combination of language use, acting, valuing, and ways of using material and expressive resources (1996). To foreground the role of language use in a Discourse, Gee uses Bakhtin's (1981) concept of *social language* as a tool of inquiry to understand how people build and recognize identities through language use (2002, 2005). According to Gee, a *social language* is a particular variety of language used to enact or recognize a particular identity in a certain setting. Each social language has its own distinctive *Discourse grammar*—"the 'rules' by which grammatical units like nouns and verbs, phrases and clauses, are used to create patterns which signal or 'index' characteristics *whos-doing-whats-within-Discourses*." (p.41, 2005) Learning to read or write in a specific social language is to recognize and acquire its unique grammatical patterns. Mastering a specific social language is to appropriate a specific social group so as to identify oneself or get recognized as a certain kind of person.

In Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block, the social language that she attempted to mold the students into is an *academic social language*, which consists of the *Discourse grammar* of a specific stylistic format, syntactic structures, and vocabulary use. As shown in the previous quote from Ms. Jones, she perceived the goal of the class as teaching the

student to write in a specific stylistic format; that is “an essay that develops a single thesis statement with multiple examples.” In the classroom, I observed that the students, from time to time, were asked to practice and rehearse a distinctive type of stylistic organization. The following excerpt shows one of the recurrent mini lessons in which Ms. Jones attempted to teach the students this particular stylistic organization through a lecture.

Ms. Jones: [Ms. Jones turned on the smart board to show PowerPoint slides in order to review the structure of a paragraph.] All right, so my question for you is “Do you have trouble with your writing?” [Ms. Jones read from the slides.]

Students: Yes.

Ms. Jones: “Do you think you will never get it right? Do you have problem with your grammar?”

Students: Yes.

Ms. Jones: “Do you not know what to write about?”

Students: Yes.

Ms. Jones: You know, the teacher gives you a topic and you’re like..uh ~[Ms. Jones did a puzzling face.] “Do you wonder what the teacher wants? Are your ideas confused?” So you started with one idea but you ended up writing about a different idea. Ok? So these are the problem. But, it’s really not that hard, ok? English writing is very much like a formula. If you can figure out the formula, you got it, it’s really not hard, Ok? So you CAN be successful. You can write a good composition. You can EVEN get an A. [Students laughed out loud.] But the

key is to write well consistently. Some of you do well on one paragraph or essay and then the next one you got a big problem. So you need to do the same thing again and again. So, you need to make sure you have these things. “Does each paragraph have a topic sentence that limits your idea?” [Ms. Jones read from the slides.] Remember your book talk about controlling ideas? So when I ask you to writ on Monday, be sure you have a topic sentence that has a controlling idea. You want to SUPPORT that topic sentence with SPECIFIC examples. This is the BIGGEST problem. Students, particularly ESL students are too general, you need to be very specific. Think about you’re painting a picture with words, and if you use general information, like painting a picture with only three colors. So, you want to paint with lots of specific examples. And then you need to have a concluding sentence. Now, when I talked about a transition sentence, that’s where we start to talk about essays, and right now we are just writing one paragraph, all I want, one paragraph, ok? But that one paragraph should be almost two pages long in 33A. In one hour, you should be writing about one and half or two pages long.

Student 1: Skipping lines?

Ms. Jones: Yeah, skipping lines, yes, ok?

Students: Oh~ Wow!

Ms. Jones: So you will write in skipping lines. Now, the reason I always take time to talk about the paragraph in Level Four is because an essay is just different paragraphs and each paragraph in the essay has to have these different things, Ok?

Students forget that. All right, so topic sentence, ok? It’s your point of view, it’s

your opinion about the topic, that's the controlling idea.

In this lecture, Ms. Jones delivered the message that learning to write in English means mastering the formula of a type of expository essay (e.g., "English writing is very much like a formula. If you can figure out the formula, you got it, it's really not hard"), which consists of topic sentences, supporting details, and concluding sentences. Such a stylistic formula was a part of the Discourse that Ms. Jones promoted in the classroom.

In addition to this formulaic essay organization, I also observed that Ms. Jones spent abundant class time teaching syntactic structures frequently seen to fit the academic register, such as passive voice, reported speech, adjective clauses, and adverb clauses. She not only taught these syntactic structures in lectures, but also prompted the students to use these compound and complex sentence structures in their writing, as shown in the following excerpt when Ms. Jones gave instruction to her students on an essay quiz.

Ms. Jones: [Ms. Jones distributed a prompt on an essay quiz on Seabiscuit and then started to read through the prompt with the class.] So, it says "you have seen the movie Seabiscuit and you have answered the questions. Now, I want you to write a paragraph that tells me what you THINK about the movie." Now the next part is very important, "DO not tell me the story." Do not tell me the story. Do not say, you know, Seabiscuit was this little horse and then it met Red Pollar, the jockey, don't tell me the story, because that's NOT the question. What's the question? What you think about the movie, that's the question, what do you think about the movie. Now, you can like the movie or you cannot like the movie, it doesn't matter, I don't care which one you pick, but you have to explain, if you

like the movie, why do you like the movie, if you didn't like the movie, why didn't you like the movie, it doesn't matter which direction you go, ok? [Jones continued to read from the prompt.] "Introduce the movie in the first couple of the sentences, and write a topic sentence that gives your opinion on the movie." So, the first couple sentences you need to introduce the topic, and that's the movie Seabiscuit, ok? So, you can say the movie Seabiscuit is about a little race horse and three men during the time of the Great Depression, you have to have something to introduce to your reader, you just can't say Seabiscuit was a good movie, because the readers of Seabiscuit will wonder what about Seabiscuit, ok? Support your opinion, I like it or I don't like it, and you're not going to say I like the movie or I don't like the movie, you will have to say the movie was interesting, the movie was exciting, the movie was boring, the movie was inspiring, whatever you want to say, but don't say I like the movie, I don't like the movie. Support your opinion, so if you think the movie was interesting, for example, support your opinion with what was interesting. You should have three to four reasons for your opinion. So, in fifty minutes, I want you to write a paragraph that has 20 sentences, write in blue or black ink, someone used purple, no purple, purple is my color, [The class laughed]. I want you to start with a cluster, the pre-writing. Remembering your writing book? You have the pre-writing with the cluster? You wrote like [Jones grabbed the textbook to show the class what a cluster looked like] Remember that in the book?

Student: To brainstorming.

Ms. Jones: Uh-hum, brainstorming. So start with the brainstorming, so you have to come up with what you think about the movie, and then your brainstorm will give you examples about that. You want to try to use coordinating conjunctions, we talked about that, and sentences with time clauses, should be past tense verbs, ok? Now you have a little over an hour. You staple the pre-writing in addition to your paragraph. I want you to make sure you do your pre-writing. [Students started to work on the essay quiz for the rest of the class time.]

As shown in her instruction on the essay quiz, what Ms. Jones promoted in the classroom was not just standard English in general, but an academic social language which consists of a particular set of *Discourse moves*. Thus, when giving the instruction, she emphasized that, in the essay quiz, the students should start with topic sentences (e.g. “So, the first couple sentences you need to introduce the topic”) and then supporting that with specific examples (e.g. “Support your opinion, so if you think the movie was interesting, for example, support your opinion with what was interesting. You should have three to four reasons for your opinion.”) She also encouraged the student to use some of the compound and complex syntactic structures commonly seen in academic genres (e.g., “You want to try to use coordinating conjunctions, we talked about that, and sentences with time clauses, should be past tense verbs, ok?”). Finally, this academic social language also consists of formal vocabulary as Ms. Jones prompted the students to use “interesting” “exciting” “boring” and “inspiring” rather than “like” or “don’t like” in the instruction (i.e., “you’re not going to say I like the movie or I don’t like the movie, you will have to say the movie was interesting, the movie was exciting, the movie was boring, the movie

was inspiring, whatever you want to say, but don't say I like the movie, I don't like the movie.") In fact, I have seen Ms. Jones frequently invited the students to distinguish formal versus colloquial discourse in the class, and prompted them to choose more formal rather than informal vocabulary when writing their class essays. The following excerpt shows one of the scenes when Ms. Jones prompted the students to choose formal language in their writing while she gave a lesson to teach adjective clauses after indefinite compound pronouns.

Ms. Jones: So, indefinite pronouns, [Jones read the example of an indefinite compound pronouns from the textbook.] "Everyone who received my e-mail knows about the party." So, indefinites are like everyone, someone .. Now, when you're writing, ok? We're speaking we can say somebody, anybody, nobody, but when we're writing, someone, no one, anyone, Ok? .. Conversation you can use body, everybody should come to the party, not good for formal essay. Everyone should come to the party. One is formal and one is informal. So, in your portfolio, one of the things you need to work on is making the language more FORMAL, ok? When you're writing, I want you to, you know, contractions? No contractions, no anybody, ok?

As shown in this excerpt, keeping checking on the students' understanding and acceptance of her instruction with the adverb phrase "okay", Ms. Jones emphasized the importance for the students to learn to distinguish the difference between oral and written language use (e.g., "Now, when you're writing, ok? We're speaking we can say somebody, anybody, nobody, but when we're writing, someone, no one, anyone, Ok?").

She also stressed that colloquial language use, such as “everybody” and contractions, was not appropriate for written assignment of this class (“Conversation you can use body, everybody should come to the party, not good for formal essay.” “So, in your portfolio, one of the things you need to work on is making the language more FORMAL, ok? When you’re writing, I want you to, you know, contractions? No contractions, no anybody, ok?”).

Ms. Jones appeared to perceive that mastering the specific stylistic organization, syntactic structures, and vocabulary demonstrated students’ acquisition of academic social language, and therefore marked them as academically capable. In the interview, she associated ESL students’ acquisition of the stylistic and linguistic structures with their academic futures in college:

After level 5, students can directly move into English 1A. So, they have to be basically prepared to go into native speaking class, and my job is to help them with content, organizational structures, grammatical structures, mechanics, all of it. Structure is important, it is not the only thing, but if a students’ grammar is incredibly poor, it doesn’t matter if they have great ideas, they are not able to communicate those ideas, so, they wouldn’t be passing.

Embedded within the academic social language that Ms. Jones attempted to mold the student into was the assumption that “to go into native speaking class” and actually to become an American college student, ESL students have to acquire this particular language variety. Furthermore, as I will show below, for Ms. Jones, the process of

acquiring the academic social language valued in U.S. academy, and by implication the process of becoming a capable student, inevitably involved adjusting and abandoning ESL students' first language socialization regarding the norm of language use and the thinking model interwoven with it.

Ms. Jones appeared to associate one's thinking processes with writing styles; acquiring a different writing style, therefore, implicitly suggested for her acquiring another cultural way of thinking, while in the process dropping the thinking valued in an ESL student's first language. For example, during one visit to the class early in the semester, I observed Ms. Jones deliver a lecture entitled "cultural patterns of thought" in a lesson aimed to teach paragraph organization to the class. The following is an excerpt of this lesson.

Ms. Jones: So, a good paragraph is a group of sentence that does these things. It develops one idea, ok? One paragraph, one idea, that's the controlling idea. It's important to develop the main idea in the paragraph. It's arranged in a logical order, this is VERY important, because your idea of logic and MY idea of logic are not the same, and that's probably the biggest problem for students, the way you think in your language, that's how you were writing in English, ok? So even if my Japanese skill is very good, I have lots of Japanese vocabulary, if I write in Japanese, and I follow the organization of American thinking, I'm going to NOT do well, because the way of thinking in Japan is VERY different from the way of thinking in the United States, and it's reflected in our writing. ...Now, this is what I was talking about, cultural patterns of thought. [Jones drew the following

diagrams on the board.]



Everyone else



Virginia



Ms. Jones

Ms. Jones: Asian languages, Asian culture is indirect, and what that means is for example, when I lived in Japan, and I had a problem at my apartment, all my neighbors were Japanese, they didn't come to me and said, you know, Jones, we have a problem with your cat. They went to my employer, [students laughed] they talked to my employer and he talked to me, worrying I might lose face, they didn't want me to feel bad about the situation, so they were indirect. Now, THAT made me feel bad, that made me feel, I was very upset, because as an English speaker, I'm very direct, ok? So, for many of you, most of you are Asian speakers and it doesn't matter if it's Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Malaysian, the culture is very similar and they are indirect. So this is one reason why I like the students to put the topic sentence at the beginning or very close to the beginning of the paragraph because what happens often is at the end when the student is writing a summary sentence for the conclusion, they really write the topic sentence, that's where they are clear and to the point, in the conclusion, but you want to put that in the beginning. So English is kind of dumb, like you tell me what you think, you tell me why you think it, and you tell me what you think again, that's kind of the

formula, and I know sometimes students have trouble with that because it seems so strange, it's not like the way you were taught to write. For my Romance languages, because I have some Spanish speakers in here, and I have an example of this, you guys tend to do this [Jones pointed to the second diagram] and your biggest problem is going to be the irrelevant sentences, going off topic, so you'll start on topic sentence, but then you will go kind of go off and some unrelated connection and then you come back and then you go off the unrelated connect and then you come back. ... So, that's why it's not enough for you just to know vocabulary and to know grammar, you can have perfect grammar and still get it wrong because you're writing in your style, ok?

In the lecture, Ms. Jones not only associated writing models with thinking models, but also asserted that there are different thinking models and therefore writing styles among speakers of Asian, Romance and American languages, with American speakers more direct in their thinking process and writing styles and Asian speakers more indirect and circular. As such, the students' first language / thinking models were presented not only as different from that of Americans', but also as a "problem," "unclear," "irrelevant," and "wrong": "your idea of logic and MY idea of logic are not the same, and that's probably the biggest problem for students"; "if I write in Japanese, and I follow the organization of American thinking, I'm going to NOT do well"; "when the student is writing a summary sentence for the conclusion, they really write the topic sentence, that's where they are clear and to the point"; "your biggest problem is going to be the irrelevant sentences, going off topic, so you'll start on topic sentence, but then you will go kind of

go off and some unrelated connection and then you come back and then you go off the unrelated connect and then you come back”; “So, that’s why it’s not enough for you just to know vocabulary and to know grammar, you can have perfect grammar and still get it wrong because you’re writing in your style.”

During my visit to the class, Ms. Jones not only delivered the “cultural patterns of thought” topic as a formal lecture in the class, but also reminded the students of the different writing – and thus different thinking -- styles among different cultures whenever the class rehearsed the stylistic organization of an essay, as shown in the following excerpt:

Ms. Jones: Remember we talk about the way of thinking? [Ms. Jones drew the diagrams that represent the cultural patterns of thought on the board.] Remember?

Students: Uh-hum.

Ms. Jones: The Asian one, so this is Virginia and this is everybody else, Ok?

Student: That’s you.

Ms. Jones: This is me. [Jones chuckled] So this one. Remember what we were... I’m going to .. I’m going to chase the rabbit, which means I’m going to go off topic, just for a minute. So, the way we think, Americans tend to be much more direct in what they’re saying as well as what they’re writing, so we will stop chasing the rabbit, ok. Uh .. for Virginia this is not such a big problem, but for everybody else this IS a problem with writing an essay, and the reason it’s a problem is because if you notice that you’re getting more and more specific and closer to the topic

as you get to the end. So many times I have read students' papers and the last sentence in the conclusion is really the thesis statement, the main idea. I'm like..WHAT! WHY is your thesis statement in the main idea, I mean in the conclusion, why is your thesis statement in the conclusion, because it needs to be at the beginning, ok? So, you wanna say your thinking, give your reasons, say your thinking, and that's kind of hard for some people.

Ms. Jones' lectures in the classroom implicitly transmitted to the students the following message: in the process of acquiring the academic social language valued in American classrooms, the kind of written patterns and thinking models that students, particularly Asian students, were socialized into in their first language is a "problem" that interferes with their learning of English. In impugning the "foreignness" of their writing, Ms. Jones also impugned the "foreignness" of their thinking, essentially seeing both not only different from, but also in conflict with what is valued in American college classrooms. Hence, Ms. Jones implied to students that in order to acquire the social language valued in U.S. academy, learning to write as an American college student does, ESL students have to abandon their cultural way of writing and of thinking.

Gee (2002) suggests that a Discourse is composed of not only distinctive ways of using oral and/or written language, but also "of distinctive ways of being and doing that allow people to enact and/or recognize a specific and distinctive socially-situated identity" (p.160). My analysis in this section shows that, in Ms. Jones' ESL classroom, to acquire the academic identity valued in U.S. academy, the students were socialized to not

only using the academic social language, which consists of distinct stylistic organization, syntactic structures, and vocabulary, but also acquiring a particular kind of thinking model. Thus, to become a competent ESL user and a capable student in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL classroom, the students were advised to drop their first language thinking model.

In the following section, I will show that, in Ms. Jones' classroom, Academic Discourse embodied not only a particular way of communicating and thinking, but also a particular way of enacting the student role.

Socializing ESL students into the student dispositions that were assumed to be valued in U.S. classrooms.

As mentioned earlier, Gee's notion of Discourse embodies not only language use but also ways of acting and behaving. Ms. Jones attempted not only to mold the ESL students into the social language and thinking model valued in the U.S. academy, but also to socialize the ESL students who barely had a schooling experience in the U.S. to the student behaviors and interactional dynamics that she regarded as valuable in U.S. college classrooms. Given this orientation, she repeatedly articulated the expectation that students coming to the class needed to be self-reliant learners responsible for their own learning. In my interview with her, when talking about the teacher's role and the students' role, Ms. Jones said:

I see myself as a facilitator and I do what I can to make the material accessible to them, I do what I can to make my time accessible to them, but ultimately they have to be responsible and they are the ones who

have to do the work and do the learning.

The message that students need to be self-reliant in the learning process was communicated repeatedly in the classroom. For example, in a lesson in which Ms. Jones led the students in reading a text that discussed a series of challenges that first-time college students could encounter in their college life, Ms. Jones tried to deliver the message that college students need to be self-reliant rather than depending on the teacher to deliver knowledge. The following is an excerpt of this lesson.

Ms. Jones: Who else can you go to or see when you get frustrated or confused?

Student: Teacher.

Ms. Jones: Teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher. I think I only talked to two of you so far, come in and ask me question. That's I'm there Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, that's why I sit in my office and I work, just waiting for you to come. We have an idiom or proverb [Jones wrote on the board] "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." This is an expression we have, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. You have to think like this, ok? So, what does that mean?

Student: XXXX, so you have to in charge.

Ms. Jones: Right, right. So, you know, I can take my horse to where the water is, but I can't pour the water down into its mouth, and make it drink, you know, I cannot cause it to drink, I can show it the water, I can do everything possible so that the horse drinks, but I can't make it drink, right? So, for students we can use this expression because we have all of

these things FOR you, and we TELL you about them, but I can't make it do it, ok? So, it's up to YOU to get the help you need. If you have trouble with something, go and find out what you have trouble with. Particularly before you take the test, ok? So, some of you, you have the verb tense test and you didn't do well on the verb tense test, so maybe you should come and talk to me about verb tenses, right? Or what can you do to improve. Or when I give you back your compositions, your grade is bad, and then how can I make my grade better? So, it's up to you. We say students are responsible for their learning, I can do some, I have some responsibility, but you also have some responsibility, all right? What else can you do to overcome obstacles?

The idea of being a self-reliant learner responsible for one's own learning, in this case initiating conversation with the teacher about self-identified problems, was not only delivered in the classroom, but also instantiated in the course syllabus and in an evaluation sheet that Ms. Jones used to assess students' performance in the middle of the semester. In the course syllabus, Ms. Jones listed desirable student behaviors that she expected from her students, including attending class regularly and punctually, submitting homework on time, avoiding disruptive classroom behaviors⁸, never cheating and plagiarizing, making contributions in peer/group work, and actively participating in college-level class discussion. In the midterm evaluation sheet, Ms. Jones used the following criteria to evaluate the performance of each individual student (emphasis as in

⁸ In the course syllabus, Ms. Jones defines disruptive behaviors include loud, rude, and/or aggressive behavior, sleeping in class, or non-participation.

original):

- Student is **always** prompt and regularly attends classes.
- Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions **more than once** per class.
- Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student **incorporates or builds off** of the ideas of others.
- Student **almost never** displays disruptive behavior during class.
- Student is **almost always** prepared for class with assignments and required class materials.

These documents indicate that three major student traits were regarded as essential for ESL students to present themselves as “students responsible for their learning” -- attendance and promptness, being vocal and participatory in the classroom, and coming to class with assignments done.

Of the three student traits valued in the class, being participatory and engaged in classroom talk was regarded as a particularly important student trait in Ms. Jones’ Level Four ESL Block. When going through the list of desirable classroom behaviors in the syllabus with the students in her first class meeting with the students, Ms. Jones highlighted the importance of being vocal and speaking up in U.S. college classrooms.

Ms. Jones: And then about active learning. Today is kind of like the first day, so I talk the most today, but hopefully in the future I don’t have to, and so because this

is a transferable course, 33A is a transfer level course, then you need to be doing the class at transfer level, which is asking you to talk, ask questions, engage, these are important. ... Also most of the time, when we go over assignment, I will ask you to go over stuff with your classmates. And if you don't have your homework done, and I'm having you work in group, then you can't participate, you are not able to share your answer, and there's a reason I have you share your answer, if you are able to explain why the answer is A when your classmates say the answer is B, that means you understand it. So, being able to explain and talk about your thinking, help you to understand, help you to do a better job.

The above excerpt shows that Ms. Jones regarded talking in the classroom as an important indicator of students in charge of their learning and engaging in the learning process: "you need to be doing the class at transfer level, which is asking you to talk, ask questions, engage, these are important" "; "So, being able to explain and talk about your thinking, help you to understand, help you to do a better job." Thus, in the classroom, I observed Ms. Jones attempted to engage the students in classroom talk by directing questions to them or soliciting their opinion as shown in the following excerpt, which I identified in my field notes as a scene that shows the typical conversational routine between Ms. Jones and her students in a mini lesson. In this lesson, Ms. Jones had the class watch a video clip entitled "An Ecovillage," which described the lifestyle of an eco-friendly village in Ithaca, New York. She then asked the students to identify the reasons why the residents of Ecovillage decided to become part of the community.

Ms. Jones: All right, what's one reason? Rachel, tell me one reason.

Rachel: Uh, health environment.

Ms. Jones: Healthier environment?

Rachel: Uh-um

Ms. Jones: Ok, what makes the environment healthier?

Rachel: Uh, XXXX they grow flowers, and they .. they recycle for the energy, and uh..

Ms. Jones: Well, all those things were true, everything you're saying is true, and that does make it a healthier environment, but the older gentlemen at the end is the one who talked about the healthier environment, what does he say about it? What made it healthier?

Rachel: Uhm..

Charlene: He said preventive medicine, like XXXX

Ms. Jones: Yes, preventive medicine.

Charlene: And less stress.

Ms. Jones: Less stress, right. So, what do you think a preventive medicine life style? [long pause] What is preventive medicine? What does that mean, Cindy?

Cindy: It prevents from having sick or something.

Ms. Jones: So you get something BEFORE you get sick, right? So, you're going to prevent becoming sick. So, what do you think.. when you think of preventive medicine, what do you think of?

Cindy: like vitamin C.

Ms. Jones: Vitamin C, ok, on regular basis you have to take vitamin C, what else

is preventive medicine? [long pause] Ann, what else can you think of?

In a typical interaction with the students, Ms. Jones would start a question, directing it to a designated student, and commenting and elaborating on the student's response, as shown in her interaction with Rachel. Although, at times, students, such as Charlene in this excerpt, chimed in the conversation voluntarily, Ms. Jones soon regained control of the conversation by directing a question to another designated student, such as Cindy and Ann. By initiating the topic and directing the floor, Ms. Jones was able to orchestrate the classroom conversation and engaged different students into a conversation.

In addition to engaging the students in classroom conversation, Ms. Jones frequently had students work in group, asking them to complete tasks or discuss answers to grammar exercise together. In group works, the students were encouraged to talk about and discuss their ideas with peers. The following is a snapshot taking place after Ms. Jones gave a lecture in PowerPoint slides to explain the grammatical rules of reported speech.

Ms. Jones: Now, you can take out your grammar book. [Students took out their grammar book.] Look at practice 61, that's page 124, ok? .. So, I want you to work with your classmates and I want you to do that practice on reported speech right now. Page 124, practice 61. So work together with a partner. [The class was silent as the students working on the exercise. Ms. Jones first sat at her desk, checking the students' homework. A few minutes later, she started to circulate the classroom, observing the group work, and then made the following announcement.]

Ms. Jones: Work together, don't work alone, because you need to hear and practice lots of talking. Try to talk about your answer and explain your thinking to your classmates, because that's how you learn.

Ms. Jones' assumption that being vocal and participatory in the classroom means being a good student who learns reflects in part a belief shared by a large number of teachers in America that the primary means to increase student engagement and deepen learning is through classroom talk (Tateishi, 2007-2008). Such a belief, however, can be in conflict with the linguistic behaviors of students from Asian cultures, who tend to see the teacher as an authoritative figure who holds the torch of knowledge and delivers it to students, rather than relying on classroom dialogues to deepen their learning or associating oral classroom talks with academic achievement (Littlewood, 2000; Wang, 2006). In fact, their cultural upbringing prompts them to use silence as a sign of respect to the teacher's authority in the classroom or of politeness in allowing someone else an opportunity to communicate their ideas (Liu, 2002).

The students' cultural way of being student, however, was regarded as a problem to Ms. Jones. Commenting on her experience of teaching a class of predominantly Asian students, Ms. Jones said in the interview,

[Asian students] are usually good students, but in the classroom environment, and that's one of the things that we struggle with when we teach ESL students who come predominantly from Asia, I think they've just been so engrained that you sit there and let the teacher teach. ... So, I think someone like Sheena would benefit more by engaging more in

the class, but she seemed very passive.

Ms. Jones' comments on Asian students reflects the model minority stereotype (Lee, 1996; Chang & Au, 2007-2008), asserting that Asian-American students are devoted, hard-working, well-behaved, but quiet at school. Hence, while Ms. Jones acknowledged that Asian students are generally "good students" who attend class regularly and submit homework on time, she also lamented that in the classroom environment, "they've just been so engrained that you sit there and let the teacher teach," evoking a sense that Asian students' silence in the classroom indicated them as irresponsible learner. Ms. Jones saw the students' cultural way as a problem to struggle with in the classroom, and also as an indicator that those who seldom articulated their ideas or asked questions in the classroom were passive students who didn't engage in the learning process, and therefore didn't take proper responsibility as students.

In sum, operating in the Academic Discourse upheld in this transfer-focused college, the curriculum enacted in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block embodied teaching not only a distinctive model of language use and thinking seen as valued in the U.S. academy, but also a specific way of performing the student role. In Gee's words, it is the combination of specific kinds of saying-being-thinking-and-acting that ESL students were invited to enact. To get recognized as a "college student" at RHC and a "good student" in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block, one had to represent oneself as an academic by not only acquiring a certain kind of language use, but also acquiring certain kinds of student dispositions, some of which conflicted with students' heritage cultural values. While most existing literature on L2 students' acquisition of academic discourse focuses

predominantly on their acquiring distinctive features of academic written English and a general set of skills and strategies for appropriating academic texts, (see Canagarajah, 2002; Nam, Benedetti, & Kim, 2008 for a review of this body of literature), Gee's theory of Discourse allows us to expand this notion of academic discourse, focusing not only on L2 students' socialization as academic writers, but connecting this to their being thinkers and actors in North American college classrooms.

Nurturing the American cultural frame.

Transmitting the dominant cultural values of the target language and shaping the cultural/national identity of the target language in the process of learning the target language is not uncommon in many language classrooms (Baquedano-Lopez, 2000; Golden, 2001; He, 2004). According to the notion of *second language socialization*, learning a second language is not only acquiring the linguistic forms of the target language, but also a process of re-socializing into a different set of cultural norms and social values, which brings transformation to one's national, cultural or social identities. For example, Baquedano-Lopez's (2000) analysis of discursive practices in a doctrina class composed of Mexican immigrants at a Catholic parish in Los Angeles shows that, through linguistic interaction in the classroom, the teacher socialized the students to the Mexican ethnic identity and affirmed their membership as dark-skinned Mexicans in the Anglophone society. Such identity shaping usually takes place implicitly in the daily linguistic interaction in the classroom between the teacher who represents the expert of the target language culture and the student the novice of the target language (He, 2003).

Nurturing American cultural frames was a salient theme in the curriculum of Ms.

Jones' Level Four ESL Block. Since the Block consisted of a three-unit course entitled "American Culture through Speaking and Listening," developing students' aural and oral language skills through discussion of American cultural and social issues was officially written into the course syllabus. During the semester, students were given various opportunities to learning about American culture through reading texts, watching movies, and interviewing native speakers of English. According to the course syllabus, these tasks were designed to help students:

- Use fluent pronunciation, including correct rhythm, sentence stress, thought groups, and linking.
- Demonstrate understanding of natural, fluent speech in movies, radio and television programs, songs, and other recordings dealing with or exemplifying American culture.
- Use paraphrasing and summarizing skills as well as reported speech in the oral reports on American culture.
- Describe and analyze differing cultural views, way of life, current events, and perspectives between the United States and other countries.

The syllabus description indicated two curriculum functions of studying American culture in this class. On the one hand, in accordance with this Academic Discourse, studying American culture was regarded as a medium to develop students' language skills for communicating in academic settings, rather than in any other communicative settings.

Therefore, the oral skills frequently used in academic settings, such as summarizing, paraphrasing, and using reported speech, were highlighted. On the other hand, studying American culture was described as a way to approach diverse cultural perspectives through “[describing] and [analyzing] differing cultural views, ways of life, current events, and perspectives between the United States and other countries”—a response to RHC’s mission of creating a “learning environment that is technologically challenging and intellectually and culturally stimulating,” and “[celebrating] a dynamic community of learners representing global diversity, ” as described in the college mission statement and ESL faculty recruitment advertisement respectively.

In the stated curriculum, the study of American culture was presented simply as a medium for academic language development, and an approach to investigate different cultural perspectives. However, in the classroom, I observed Ms. Jones attempting to socialize the students into American cultural frames (i.e., the mainstream cultural norms of the American white middle class), inviting them more fully to take on American values. For example, during my visits to the class, I saw the class watch the movie and read text about Seabiscuit, the racing horse. The following scene took place when Ms. Jones explained the vocabulary “underdog” from the Seabiscuit story they read.

Ms. Jones: So, Americans were so excited over the underdog. Why do you think that’s true? This is the heart of the Seabiscuit story, this underdog story, right? You saw the movie, so you know that Polar was an underdog, Smith was an underdog, Seabiscuit was an underdog, the only one who isn’t an underdog is Howard because he has a lot of money, ok? What’s with the underdog story, why do you

think we like the story? Why is it so important to us? [long pause] Cindy, what do you think?

Cindy: He, he, Seabiscuit was an inspiration for the people to become better, if.. if they are given a chance.

Ms. Jones: Right, right, so, the idea with the underdog is if you're given a chance, you can succeed. So, Americans have a very strong feeling of if I have a chance, I can be successful, if you give me the chance. So this idea with the underdog, when you have people or animals who don't have good chance to win, but yet they win, and when they have a good story, maybe their life is difficult, and they overcome many obstacles, so for example, ALL of you are second language learners, you are underdogs in college, ok? Because you don't have English as first language, you don't have culture that will be in the classroom, so when you go to college, you're an underdog. But ESL students do very well, because they work very hard, so that's the idea of the underdog story, ok? If you have lots of money and private tutor coming to your house every day, then you would not really be considered an underdog, but most of you were working, or you come from working class family, you know, your parents were spending a lot of money for you to come to school, that's an underdog story.

In this conversation, using first person plural reference, Ms. Jones identified herself as an agent of American culture (e.g. "So, Americans were so excited over the underdog. ... Why do you think we like the story? Why is it so important to us?"), and invited the students in effect to become "American" by associating themselves with the notion of the

“underdog” who, in America, can succeed by working very hard-- “so that’s the idea of the underdog story, ok?”. Through such discursive interaction, Ms. Jones not only drew the students’ attention to a salient American cultural value, but also invited them to adopt this value, to become “typical Americans” by fitting their non-American circumstances into this American underdog story.

In another class conversation, Ms. Jones attempted to transmit American cultural frames to her students by implicitly suggesting that mainstream American cultural norms were superior to or more desirable than those of other cultures. When the class read and discussed a text on cultural diversity, in explaining the idea of cultural diversity, Ms. Jones juxtaposed the practice of American rodeo with the practice of Mexican horse tripping, apparently to demonstrate differences in cultural traditions. But she then led her students to perceive American rodeo as a more humane practice than Mexican horse tripping, not just a different practice, and the American perspective on human-animal relationships superior to the Mexican perspective. Following is an excerpt of the conversation between Ms. Jones and her students when discussing this topic.

T1 Ms. Jones: When we talk about cultural diversity we are talking about having an understanding about different culture, ok? And having some acceptance of different cultures. Now sometimes, that’s not a big deal, ok? So, if..we are talking about .. So we have a large Hispanic groups in the United States, southern California, particularly from Mexico, right? We have lot of people are from Mexico. And cultural diversity would say we want to understand their culture, we want to understand a little of

their heritage. So Cinco de Mayo is a big celebration, we have lots of opportunities for understanding culture from food, dance, and music, and that's kind of the idea of cultural diversity. Now, there's is a practice in ... [Jones wrote "rodeo" on the board] Anyone knows what a rodeo is?

T2 Students: Yeah.

T3 Ms. Jones: What's the rodeo?

T4 Student 1: horse striden?

T5 Ms. Jones: The rodeo is they would jump and have a competition where they might ride the cow, the bull, or they ride on the horse, like cowboys, the American rodeo. Well, in the Mexican rodeo, one of the cultural tradition is something that's called horse tripping. So what the Mexican cowboys would do is they have a wild horse running around and they rode the horse on the front leg, so obviously the horse is moving, right? And you're trying to catch it by the front leg that will be difficult to do. But what's going to happen to the horse if you catch the horse by the front leg?

T6 Student 2: It's gonna fall.

T7 Ms. Jones: It's gonna fall, ok? And from our little knowledge we have about the race horses, what happen when the horse falls? .. It breaks its leg. And when the horse breaks its leg, what happens to the horse?

T8 Students: Got killed.

T9 Ms. Jones: You have to kill it, ok? So, this is the cultural tradition within

the Mexican rodeo that they want to bring into the United States. Well, horses are like dogs in the United States. You know, dogs are like we say men's best friend. Well, horse got that same kind of feeling in the United States. Why do you think that's true? ... Think about American history.

T10 Student 2: Because of the history they had, the war, they go to places with transportation.

T11 Ms. Jones: Transportation, the whole idea of the west, right? So, the tradition of horses in the east coast is very different from the tradition of horses in the west coast. So, if you were to go and learn horseback riding on the east coast, you don't have as much western riding, the style of the cowboy, you have more English style than you have around here. Here is about western style, there's a lot of romantic idea about the west and the cowboy, so there's a real relationship between the owner of the horse and the horse, they're partners, they communicate very well. So, Americans see horses and dogs kind of the same idea. They're kind of above the farm animals. But for the Hispanic culture, particularly in this idea of the horse tripping, that's just a sport to them. Or bull fighting, what happen to the bull fighting?

T12 Student 3: Killing them.

T13 Ms. Jones: They ended up killing them, but what are they doing in the bull fight?

T14 Student 3: like stab with a sword.

- T15 Ms. Jones: They have a red cape and they have a sword, and they continually stabbing the animal, right? And you don't see that in the United States. NO, NO, NO.
- T16 Student 4: kind of brutal.
- T17 Ms. Jones: It's VERY brutal. And so it's not allowed in the United States. Horse tripping for U.S. is also very brutal, because you're killing the animal. If you see the American rodeo, an animal MIGHT get hurt, but they do many things to try to protect the animals so that the animal does not get hurt. And so when we go back this idea of cultural diversity, so you have many Mexicans who want to bring that cultural idea into the United States, and there's a ka, ka, ka, resistance, because the Americans say uh, uh, uh, uh, no, no, right? So, when you have cultural diversity, some of it is easy to understand and accept, but some of it is like .. I don't understand that, I can't understand that. So I CAN'T understand why it's fun to hurt an animal, and maybe have to kill the animal, or like the bull fighting, I don't understand that.

In turn one, Ms. Jones called on the students to identify themselves with her as Americans in southern California, using the first person plural "we" to refer to herself and the students, and the third person plural "they" to refer to people from Mexico. Such a linguistic move set a mood for the discussion that followed on the American rodeo versus Mexican horse tripping, inviting the students to identify American rodeo as *our practice* and Mexican horse tripping as *their practice*. Furthermore, it potentially

distanced the Hispanic students in the class (e.g., student 2) away from their ethnic identity by othering their own cultural practice of horse tripping.

In this discourse mood, Ms. Jones led the class to view the practice of Mexican horse tripping as a brutal practice and suggested that animal life were treated carelessly in Hispanic culture. In turn five to turn eight, Ms. Jones first juxtaposed Mexican horse tripping with the American rodeo. She then led the students to see the Mexican horse tripping as an inhumane and cruel practice that not only breaks the legs of the horse, but also causes the death of the horse. This notion was further reinforced in turns twelve to sixteen when Ms. Jones led the students to construe Mexican horse tripping like Spanish bull fighting, both practices being “VERY brutal,” involving “killing” and “continually stabbing the animal.” At the end of turn eleven, she conflated Mexico horse tripping with Hispanic culture, and denounced Hispanic culture for taking a brutal practice like horse tripping as “just a sport to them,” suggesting that a careless attitude to animal life was woven into the Hispanic culture.

On the other hand, Ms. Jones, representing herself as an expert on American culture, used American rodeo to portray America culture as more humane than Hispanic culture. In turns nine to eleven, Ms. Jones, portrayed the American view of horses with positive language, infusing the American perspective of horses with romantic ideas, such as “men’s best friend,” “horses are above the farm animals” and “there’s a real relationship between the owner of the horse and the horse, they are partners, they communicate very well” and so on. Based on these romantic ideas of the American perspective of horses, in turn seventeen, Ms. Jones defended American rodeo against Mexican horse tripping,

depicting American rodeo as a practice that “an animal MIGHT get hurt, but they do many things to try to protect the animals so that the animal does not get hurt.” Ms. Jones not only suggested that American rodeo is a more civilized practice than Mexican horse tripping, but also established the contrasting values of human-animal relationship between American culture and Hispanic culture. Furthermore, she conflated the white middle class American culture that she represents with the values that shared by all people in the U.S. as she used “American” and “the U.S.” interchangeably in the classroom talk. This premise allowed her to announce that some practices of other cultures, such as Mexican horse tripping, are not desirable or acceptable in the U.S. for it conflicts with the American values. In the five minutes classroom conversation, Ms. Jones depicted American rodeo as a more civilized practice than Mexican horse tripping, and America a more humanitarian society than Mexico. The cultural ways of America were rendered as more desirable than the other cultural perspectives.

Although Ms. Jones occasionally showed interest in the students’ first language culture in the classroom, such conversation usually was not brought into extended discussion in the classroom or was marked as casually side conversation unrelated to the academic task at hand. For example, after giving a mini lesson on the use of conditional clauses, Ms. Jones asked some of the students to put answers to grammar exercises on the board, and then went through the answers with the students.

Ms. Jones: [Read Mathew’s writing on the board.] “If I were fluent in English, I would write a book.” “REALLY? [Ms. Jones spoke in a playful tongue and then the students giggled] Ok~ What will your book be about?”

Terry: Ms. Jones. [Students laughed]

Ms. Jones: About me? [Students laughed out louder.] That will be a boring book.

Mathew: Uhm.. Uhm I'm going to write something about.. about my life in China and the ..uhm .. the difference between my life in China and my life in the U.S.

Ms. Jones: Good, that will be interesting for people to read. Especially since China is becoming more popular in the global stage. And then next one~ "If I could see the future, I would do things better now."

Although this conversation took place during a time of formal classroom instruction, the students were engaged in a less serious discourse mood as Ms. Jones started the conversation with a jocular tongue (e.g., "REALLY? Ok~ What will your book be about?") that incurred one of Mathew's student peers to mock on his idea of writing a book in English. Furthermore, even if Ms. Jones positively commented on Mathew's bicultural experience and his first language cultural identity (e.g. "Good, that will be interesting for people to read. Especially since China is becoming more popular in the global stage"), she didn't bring Mathew's interest in writing a book about his bicultural experience into an extended discussion, but veered away from this topic.

In another conversation taking place one day before formal class instruction started, Ms. Jones asked Virginia about a practice of Hispanic culture.

Ms. Jones: Virginia, do you have a Quinceañera?

Virginia: Yes.

Ms. Jones: Yes, it's a question I have to check, because America maybe different from El Salvador. Do people when they come to Quinceañera, do they bring

presents?

Virginia: Yes.

Ms. Jones: What kind of presents?

Virginia: Uhm~

Ms. Jones: My mother is going to a Quinceañera because my niece got invited to a Quinceañera, and my mother is like.. “I don’t know what do we do?” because this is, you know, very cultural. Quinceañera, by the way, is the fifteenth birthday celebration, and it’s a big big party, almost like a wedding. It was United States, but I don’t know about El Salvador. So, the celebration is fifteenth, right? and ..

Virginia: XXXX [Virginia seemed to recall the kind of presents she got.]

Ms. Jones: Some cultures, like the Jewish, they have a bar mitzvah, I can bring cash.

Virginia: That sounds good, I think I like it better.

Ms. Jones: We got to find out what’s the American Quinceañera tradition because it could be very very different. .. All right, if you brought me your journal, come get your journal, so you’ll keep working on it.

In this conversation, Ms. Jones recognized Quinceañera as a practice of Hispanic culture, and positioned Virginia, a Hispanic student, as an expert of this particular practice, implicitly affirming Virginia’s cultural identity -- “Do people when they come to Quinceañera, do they bring presents?” “What kind of presents?” “my mother is like.. “I don’t know what do we do?” because this is, you know, very cultural.” Nevertheless, Ms. Jones also discredit Virginia’s expert position by stressing, at the beginning as well as the

end of this conversation, that there's an American Quinceañera, which could be different from that of El Salvador (e.g., "it's a question I have to check, because America maybe different from El Salvador" "We got to find out what's the American Quinceañera tradition because it could be very very different.") Thus, although Ms. Jones did recognize Virginia's cultural identity and her cultural ways of life, after all, it was the American way of doing Quinceañera that was brought to the center of their conversation.

The excerpts of classroom interaction presented in this section indicate that, through the linguistic interaction in the classroom, Ms. Jones attempted to nurture American cultural frames for her ESL students who are newcomers of the American society, teaching them not only to use English, and to focus especially on academic discourse, but also to think and act like Americans. As she implicitly touted American values, she was also, implicitly, inviting the students to take on an American way of being, what Gee would call an American Discourse or identity.

Conclusion

Gee suggests that identity is "being recognized as a certain 'kind of person' in a given context" (2000-2001, p.99). My analysis in this chapter shows that situated in the context of the transfer-focused college, ESL curriculum was in conversation with the college's value of facilitating academic transfer by cultivating ESL students into capable academics through helping them acquire Academic Discourse. Shaped by such institutional values, a good student in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block was projected as someone who acquires the academic social language and thinking model valued in the U.S. academy, displays the student dispositions valued in the U.S. college classroom, and

thinks with American cultural frames in mind.

In the meantime, the local process of identity construction in the classroom is also shaped by the beliefs and values commonly seen in the broader U.S. society. Taken-for-granted assumptions about ESL students' first language cultures as a problem in learning English, about Asian students as silent model minority whose cultural ways sometimes conflict with American values, and about the association of classroom talk with students' academic achievement all penetrated into the daily practices of the classroom and shaped what it means to be a good student and a capable academic in Ms. Jones' classroom.

Nevertheless, as literature in L2 socialization shows, although social institutions, such as schools, have the power to transmit and cultivate certain sociocultural values and identities through linguistic practices in classrooms, as human agents, L2 students do not always comply with such institutional goals. Golden's (2001) study of adult Russian immigrants learning Hebrew as a second language in Israel, for example, has shown that although the school intended to transform immigrants from the former Soviet Union to full members of the Israeli society, teaching them not only to speak, but also to think and act like an "authentic" Israeli, these L2 students did not necessarily cooperate with the teacher's goal. Thus, the assumption that L2 students attend schools with the goal of becoming full members of the target language community doesn't always apply. As I will show in the subsequent chapters, the ESL students in Ms. Jones' classroom were simultaneously members of multiple discourse communities and they at times referred to the values and practices they participated in other discourse communities outside school to appropriate the kind of student and cultural identities that the school and the instructor

invited them to take on. They actively negotiated and shaped these institutionally expected roles. In the next chapter, I will depict how the ESL students I studied, drawing from multiple resources and restrictions inside as well as outside the college, interpreted their role as student and as ESL learner in a transfer-focused college, focusing on how the focal ESL students aligned with and contested the identity into which the instructor invited them to position themselves.

Chapter 5

The Community College ESL Students

Community college ESL students are complex social beings. Their student identity usually intersects with the identities of their everyday life world—the kind of sociocultural membership they are affiliated with outside the college classroom. Examining the social adaptation of nontraditional students in community colleges, such as new immigrants, students with disabilities and adult students, Levin (2007) suggests that we understand the college experience of nontraditional students with the assumption that “ ‘college’ for students cannot be viewed or understood as the principal or primary community ... College is situated within the life experiences of students and the environments they inhabit, as well as the community with which they interact on a daily basis” (p.65). Indeed, for many ESL students in Ms. Jones’ Level Four ESL Block, college cannot be viewed or understood as their primary community as it is for traditional college students. For example, most of the ESL students in the case-study classroom lived with their families, located in ethnic enclaves, rather than in the college dorms with other student peers, and rarely participated in social clubs or extra-curricular activities on campus as traditional college students do. In addition to attending college classes, many of them worked for a substantial amount of time to undertake or share the financial burden of their family. Several of them were married and had to struggle with the dilemma of whether to priorities their identities in the family or school. These students were members of multiple communities in addition to the community of the college classroom.

From Gee's point of view, Discourses are always multiple, and the different Discourses that one possesses interact in complicated ways. In addition to the primary Discourse that one acquires early in home-based socialization, there are arrays of secondary Discourses that one acquires within social institutions, such as religious groups, community organizations, schools, workplaces, or governments. While some degree of conflict and tension will almost always be present, for some people there are more overt conflicts between two or more of their Discourses than there are for others. When such overt conflict or tension exists, it can deter acquisition of one or the other of the conflicting Discourses. As Gee (1996) says, "true acquisition of many mainstream Discourses involves ... active complicity with values that conflict with one's home- and community-based Discourses, especially for many women and minorities" (p.147). For community college ESL students, acquiring the mainstream school-based Discourse is, theoretically, tension-filled because a different set of communicative or cultural norms valued in their early socialization at home, previous schooling, and community-based institutions may conflict with those promoted in the schools of the host society.

In this chapter, I argue that the community college students I studied were complex social beings participating in multiple communities and responding to diverse discourses. They drew from the norms, values, and role expectations in their life world outside the college to construct their college goals, respond to the kind of student identity they were invited to take on within the institution where Academic Discourse is the mainstream, and make meaning of their school-based language learning activities. That is, while the students strove to appropriate the kind of student identity underwritten in the Academic

Discourse, as human agents participating in multiple discourse communities, they also attempted to accommodate their prior language and culture in the classroom community. Their investment on learning ESL was selective and different language skills were imbued with different meanings associated with the kind of student identity in relation to which they desired to position themselves and the kind of membership they were affiliated with outside the college classroom. In this chapter, I suggest that understanding the community college ESL students whom I studied as human agents drawing from diverse discourses to negotiate their school-based identities will help us make sense of their participation in school-based online language learning activities as well as the multiple identities they enacted as they interacted with each other online. In the following section, drawing from Gee's notion of multiple Discourses, I will illustrate how the discourses that the focal students participated in their life world outside the college shaped their college goals and their enactment of student identity at RHC.

Students' Perception of Education and Future Opportunities

As discussed in the previous chapter, Academic Discourse is the mainstream Discourse that is valued at RHC, and complicity with the Academic Discourse means to perform student identity in a distinctive way of saying-writing-being-and-valuing. In this section, I attempt to understand the focal students' perceptions of their student identity and the motivation that drove them to comply with/resist Academic Discourse through their perception of future life opportunities and perceptions of higher education in the U.S.

When listening to the focal students talking about their college goals, their adaptation to college life at RHC, and their future opportunities, I found their perception of

education was in many ways under the influence of the socio-cultural identities they took on in their life worlds outside college. Thus, in Ms. Jones' ESL classroom, while the students were invited to take on an academic identity underwritten in the mainstream Discourse of RHC, they also managed to meet the role expectations in their life worlds outside the college. In the following, I look into how the focal students drew from the discourses in their life worlds outside the college to help construct their college goals, and thus their student identity. I suggest that students' adaptation to the kind of student identity underwritten in the Academic Discourse were shaped by the role expectations and social practices they participated in their life worlds outside college.

Students with the academic goal of getting transferred.

For community college students, college goals might be getting transferred into four-year universities, getting credentials for vocational training in a profession, or getting basic skills remediation to fulfill life functions. Since, as indicated in the previous chapter, RHC is known as a transfer-focused college, many of the students at RHC, including those enrolled in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block, had the academic goal of transferring to four-year universities and getting a bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, their motivation to do well at school and the value they perceived in a bachelor's degree had different meanings for students of different social and economic backgrounds.

For younger students who were financially supported by wealthy parents, the aspiration of obtaining a bachelor's degree tended to be tied to parental expectations. Graduated from a renowned college-preparation high school in Taiwan but not academically excellent in her prior schooling experience, Sheena, for example, was sent

to continue her higher education in the U.S. by her parents, who were upper-middle class professionals in Taiwan. When asked about her college goals and future life, Sheena said,

YC: You just told me in our previous conversation that after you finish the study here at RHC, you are going to transfer to a four-year university.

Sheena: Yes, I want to transfer to a university. I like Physical Science. I want to be a scientist. My parents also think it is a good career. ... If I study in Taiwan, because of my (previous academic) grades, I can't go to a good university. I can't become a scientist. So they sent me to study here. ... Now, my mother is paying for my tuition and life here. They are expensive! So, I have better study hard.

Coming from a professional family, Sheena's goal of getting a bachelor's degree and becoming a science professional could be interpreted as, in addition to self-fulfillment, an act of meeting her parents' expectation, an obligation tied to the fact that her tuition and living expenses were costing her parents a great deal of money and in this sense represented a sacrifice her parents were making for her. In a similar vein, Sarah's college goal was tied to family expectations. Like Sheena, Sarah wasn't academically excellent in China. She emigrated to the U.S. from China with her parents, who expected their daughter to "have a good education." When asked about her college goal, Sarah said,

Sarah: I plan to go to a 4-year university, but I still don't know which university I will choose.

YC: And do you know your major, which area will you probably pursue?

Sarah: Probably business because my family is running a business, they

open a company about accessories. So, I can help them.

Sheena and Sarah's perception of education as a means to meet parental expectations is not uncommon in the literature documenting Asian immigrant students at U.S. schools (see Lee, 1991; Lee, 1996). According to Chang's (2003) narrative history of Chinese Americans, in the last decades, a large number of immigrants from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong were professionals or from families with high social and economic status in their homeland. Sparing their children from the cutthroat academic competition in their homeland was often cited as the most popular reasons for Chinese emigrants to attend U.S. schools, along with achieving economic success and avoiding the political corruption or instability of their homeland. Coming from upper-middle class families who were willing to pay for expensive tuitions and living costs or endure the difficulties of emigration in exchange for a better education of their children, Sheena and Sarah perceived earning a bachelor's degree in the U.S. not only as personal growth or self-advancement, but also as a reward to the sacrifices their parents had made for them, showing a sense of being "in debt" to their parents when talking about their life in the U.S. and college goals.

YC: It must be difficult for you to leave all your friends and relatives in China and move to the U.S.

Sarah: Yes, especially for my parents. I think they made a very big decision. It is also a turning point to them, because their English is bad, especially my mom. She can't understand English, totally can't understand. The only purpose they are here is for me and my sister, I mean they give

up so much just for our education.

Notably, Sarah and Sheena both mentioned their parents when speaking of their college goals and their life in the host society; their sense of self appears implicitly shaped by the Confucian cultural values which highlight the place of family in an individual's life and stress paying back the benevolence of the parents as the basic virtue of filial piety (Gao, 1996). In that sense, the Discourse valued in their home communities drove them to appropriate enthusiastically the academic identity reflected by appropriating Academic Discourse in Gee's sense of the word. For example, both of them were observed to spend much of their time after class in the Learning Assistance Center to complete course assignments or see tutors for help. They also voluntarily approached me several times, asking me to help them edit their course essays and read documents of transfer requirements, and were curious about how I overcame the linguistic and cultural barriers in the university. In addition to Ms. Jones' ESL class, they also took many academic courses, such as Math and Biology, to get transfer-ready. In Ms. Jones' class, they were observed to attend the class regularly and submit course assignments on time. Although both of them were brought up in a heritage culture that stresses students' obedience to teacher's authority and therefore seldom actively bid for the floor to talk in the classroom as Ms. Jones expected a good academic student does, when prompted to respond to Ms. Jones' questions, they usually did not deviate from the academic topics or the interactional routines that Ms. Jones orchestrated, as the following excerpts of classroom discourse show.

Ms. Jones: What can you infer about the relationship about people to nature? ..

Sarah.

Sarah: Um.. they accept things that happen.

Ms. Jones: They accept things that happen instead of trying to fight them, ok?

Students: Um hum

Ms. Jones: Good. What else about nature? .. Ann.

Even when they were not able to respond to Ms. Jones' question correctly on the first try, they were able to do so in the subsequent interaction, presenting themselves as academically capable in the classroom -- as shown in the next excerpt of classroom discourse.

Ms. Jones: What's ANOTHER reason? .. Sarah, what was a reason?

Sarah: Uh.. preserving the land and having house.

Ms. Jones: Um.. No, that's not a reason that they gave. .. That's true, that happens, but that's not one of the reasons that one of those people gave. ..

Sarah: Uhm~ they can share things like..lawn mowers.

Ms. Jones: Ok, they can conserve and share. Conserve resources and share, like the lawn mowers.

In the above excerpt, while Sarah actively presented herself as an academically capable student by voluntarily giving Ms. Jones' question another shot, Ms. Jones not only allowed her a chance to do so, but also elaborated on Sarah's idea in her comment (e.g., "Ok, they can conserve and share. Conserve resources and share, like the lawn mowers.>"). Such an interactional pattern corroborated Sarah's identity as an academically capable student in the classroom. As such, Sarah and Sheena appeared to be willing to invest in an

academic identity both in and out of the classroom in order to achieve their college goal of getting transferred. In Gee's words, the young wealthy Chinese students, like Sarah and Sharon, drew from both the home-based Discourse and the dominant Discourse of the college to enact their student identity in the classroom. Thus, while taking on the academic identity, they were also aligning with their cultural norms, fulfilling their social role as daughters in the family.

Seeing school success as a way to repay familial sacrifice, not merely an act of self-advancement, is not unique to immigrant students of Confusion heritage culture. For example, Suarez-Orozco (1991) found similar psycho-social motivation among recent immigrant students from Central America, who associated education with parental expectations and future life opportunities, and therefore strove to do well at school. Nevertheless, my study shows that the socioeconomic status of immigrant students appeared to play a role in shaping the students' college goals and experience. For example, Virginia, who emigrated from El Salvador in escape of the poor economic conditions and social violence of her homeland, appeared uncertain about her college goals and had to struggle with the work-school dilemma.

YC: Why do you come to RHC, what is your goal, what is your plan?

Virginia: I would like to get an associate degree or maybe transfer to a university, but sometimes I feel it's too hard, too difficult. ... Sometime I feel like I'm dreaming too high or something. Sometimes, you know, the self-esteem .. sometimes the self-esteem is not enough. Also I'm thinking about to work because of the money. Most of the time, it's very

important. ... I saved some money for the years that I didn't study, and I pay for my own tuition, but if I need some money, [my father] will lend me the money, he's good. Also, I'm working because I want to bring my mom here, and I need to show I can do a job and I can help her, to bring her, you know, to have that record to show that I can pay tax and everything.

YC: Is it hard for you to work and study at the same time?

Virginia: Yes, it's hard. The hours that I spend working, I could use them doing my portfolio or resting or something, so I feel better to come back to do more homework. Yes, it's difficult.

Unlike her wealthy young student peers who were financially supported by their parents, Virginia's college goal and student identity were shaped by a very different socioeconomic background. Getting a higher education was not a privilege that Virginia was born into, but something she had to work hard to earn. She had the goal of getting an Associate degree and even of transferring to a four-year university, but the financial constraint and family history prevented her from "dreaming too high," and she felt the goal of getting a bachelor's degree too hard to reach. As such, Virginia's college goals and experiences were highly socio-culturally embedded. On the one hand, in alignment with the U.S. Discourse about college and success, her cultural norms prompted her to perceive a higher education degree as a means to develop skills for a professional job and bring financial security. She, thus, strove hard to align with this Discourse by appropriating the academic identity valued in RHC: she was seen to attend class

regularly, submit homework on time, and achieve high grades in Ms. Jones' class.

Although I seldom saw her articulating her ideas voluntarily in Ms. Jones' class, I once heard that Ms. Jones told the class that if they needed a good writing example, they should "read Virginia's summary, it's good." In addition to ESL courses, Virginia, like Sarah and Sheena, also enrolled in many other academic courses and courses designed to help first-time college students develop study skills and adapt to academic life. On the other hand, financial constraints and family duties became overpowering burdens in acquiring the academic identity that RHC attempted to socialize her into. As Virginia said in the interview, her work and family duties had interfered with her school work.

Although I saw her a few times studying in the Learning Assistance Center, she usually had to leave the college by noon for her afternoon work or house chores. When many of her student peers tried to book as many office visits as they could with Ms. Jones to edit their final course essays, Virginia could only afford one office appointment with Ms. Jones on top of her course hours and work schedule.

According to Gee (1996), while some degree of conflict will be present in the Discourses that one participates in, for some people there are more overt conflicts between two or more of their Discourses than there are for others. When overt conflict exists between two Discourses, it can deter acquisition of one or the other of the conflicting Discourse. Thus, Virginia was caught in overtly conflicting Discourses and one of them was severely interfering with the acquisition of the other. While she perceived appropriating an academic identity would advance her future life opportunities in the U.S., she also had to respond to the socioeconomic constraints in her life world

outside college. Despite her working hard to reach her college goal and appropriate the academic identity, at the time I drafted the manuscript, I heard from another focal student that Virginia drop out from RHC for unknown reasons.

In addition to parental expectations and socioeconomic conditions that ESL students have to deal with in their life worlds outside the college, gender expectation of the students' home community can also affect ESL students' college experiences. Despite her intention of getting a bachelor's degree, Charlene, a married female student of twenty-six, was reserved when talking about her college goal of getting transferred.

YC: So, what is your goal here?

Charlene: My goal, I just want to get an AA degree for now.

YC: So, after that, do you intend to transfer?

Charlene: Um .. I .. I want to transfer, but because of my age, I don't know.

YC: Because of your age? Why is that a problem to you?

Charlene: Because now I am still working, so I might need a longer time for my AA degree. So by the time I go to the university, I might be 30 years old. ... Because I don't want to go to school if I have kids, any kids. And people say it's better for you to have kids before 30, so I try to complete my study before 30.

When I asked why she hesitated when telling people about her goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree since she had proved herself a competent student by maintaining a 4.0 GPA in her transcript, she said,

因為我很想拿到bachelor's degree, 我怕講了做不到啊, 因為我.. 我也是結婚了, 然後我就是覺得好像我的年紀, 好像現在我比人家慢, 所以有時候我跟人家講我還是講我就是拿一個AA degree 就好了。像我媽媽或我姐姐們都跟我講 ▪ 女人最好28 ▪ 就結婚, 孩子什麼什麼的, 可是他們的生活就圍著孩子什麼的, 我不要, 我一定要拿到degree 再生。(I really would like to get a bachelor's degree, but I feel ashamed if I tell people about it and can't reach the goal eventually. Because I am married.. and because of my age, I feel I'm at a slower track than everybody else. So, I just tell people that an AA degree is good enough for me. Because my mother and sisters all tell me it's better for a woman to get married before 28, considering things like giving birth. But when I saw their life centered around their children after they gave birth, I told myself I don't want to be like that. I want to get the degree before I give birth.)

It appears that gender expectations of immigrant women's home communities can commonly affect their learning experience at school. For example, in a study of female Portuguese ESL students, Goldstein (2001) found that, expected to prioritize their roles as housekeepers, wives, and mothers over learning English at school, the female Portuguese ESL students were restricted access to attend ESL class at school. In Charlene's case, the home-based gender expectations of women getting married at a "desirable" age and the responsibility of child care sharply interfered with her sense of college goals as she was

uncertain about her college goal and unconfident of whether she was able to reach her goal (e.g., “I want to transfer, but because of my age, I don’t know.” “Because I am married.. and because of my age, I feel I’m at a slower track than everybody else. So, I just tell people that an AA degree is good enough for me.”)

To counter against the gender discourse valued in her home-based community, Charlene had to work extra hard in order to align with the academic identity valued at RHC. At the time we met, she not only had completed many academic courses to fulfill the transfer requirements, but also had maintained a 4.0 GPA in those courses. In Ms. Jones’s class, she took as many opportunities as she could to present herself as an academically competent student, such as going to Ms. Jones’ office hours for advice on improving her English, attending class, and submitting homework on time. In the earlier academic term, I noticed that Charlene, like her Chinese peers Sarah and Sheena, seldom voluntarily spoke up in the classroom unless she was prompted to do so by the instructor as shown in the following interaction taking place on March 19th--the third week of instruction:

Ms. Jones: All right, next question on page 26 was “complete the following statement with expressions to ask about alternatives.” What did you put for 3A ?

[long pause] Charlene, what do you have?

Charlene: If I can’t take the placement test on Friday, will it be possible to take it another day?

Ms. Jones: Good, then next one, for 3B, Sarah, what do you put for 3B?

Nevertheless, when Ms. Jones commented that Charlene “rarely contributes to class by

offering ideas and asking questions” in the mid-term evaluation, Charlene, who said in the interview “I just don’t feel comfortable speaking in the class. I think I’m not supposed to talk too much,” stepped outside her comfort zone and started to speak up in class. When speaking in the classroom, she always adhered to the academic topic at hand and was responded to positively by Ms. Jones. For example, when Ms. Jones was giving a lecture on how to convert direct speech into indirect speech, using the examples she wrote on the board (e.g. “He will come” changes to “He said he would come.” “All tickets must be bought in advance” changed to “He said that all tickets had to be bought in advance”) Charlene raised her hand and asked a question.

Charlene: When do we need to add “that”?

Ms. Jones: Uh, “that” is optional in a noun clause. Ok, so that’s a good point.

Sometimes, I have it and sometimes I don’t. .. Um, she’s talking about optional.

So, if it helps you to remember you’re singling a noun clause. So, a noun clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb that’s acting like a noun. So, in the sentence, noun can be the subject of the sentence or can be the object. So, here, it’s acting as the object, right? “He said”, what did he say, “he would”. Now, you can use the word “THAT” to indicate the beginning of the clause. So, he said THAT he would come. And here you could say “He said all tickets had to be bought in advance.” It’s optional. Ok? But that’s a good thing to point out, thank you.

In the above interaction, to appropriate the academic identity promoted by Ms. Jones in the classroom, Charlene not only had to deviate from the proper student behavior valued

in her heritage culture—listening and abiding to what the teacher says--by voluntarily initiating a topic in the classroom, but also raised a question that was relevant to the academic topic at hand. Her academic contribution was corroborated by Ms. Jones as she not only complimented Charlene's idea (e.g., "that's a good point" "that's a good thing to point out, thank you"), but also turned Charlene's question to a contribution that deepened the class' understanding of the academic topic at hand by directing the whole class to Charlene's question (e.g., "Um, she's talking about optional") and addressing the question explicitly to the whole class. Hence, while the gender expectations of her home community were a strong influence on Charlene's perception of whether she would be able to achieve her academic goal, these influences were interestingly also propelling her to work harder in the moment in order to get recognized as a good student and get transferred to earn a degree before her "biological clock" ran out. As Gee (1996) says, "true acquisition of many mainstream Discourses involves ... active complicity with values that conflict with one's home-and community-based Discourses, especially for many women and minorities" (p.147). Thus, Charlene, a female minority student participating in two competing Discourses, worked extra hard in order to acquire the mainstream Discourse of RHC.

Although the goal of getting a bachelor's degree can threaten the gender expectations of her home community, Charlene's persistence in taking on an academic identity can be understood from the value she attached to the higher education she received in the U.S. Like the other focal students, Charlene acknowledged that a bachelor's degree could advance her future career and increase her income. Perhaps more

important than the instrumental value, Charlene perceived a sense of the cultural approbation that a bachelor's degree would bring her. She said in the interview,

像之前中學同學家境不是很好，好像還要出來上班，或者孕婦還要上班打工這樣，人家讀完了反而我是沒讀完，所以我會覺得不好意思。

雖然他們對我很好，但是就是講話啊，他們都有大學生活可以，可能就是因為我沒有那個degree，所以我就一直很想要。因為我覺得

在這個社會上，degree已經算是很普遍，因為以前我小的時候，

diploma是很普遍，那我來這邊我覺得degree是最普遍的，像很多人

有master, PhD的嘛，我丈夫、姊姊也是有master什麼的。..然後我開始唸書啊，我覺得很多東西真的有唸書，真的有學問跟沒有上過學校

的人是不一樣的，因為你去上課真的可以學到很多很多東西，我覺得

很有用。(I feel embarrassed about not being able to finish my

undergraduate education. Some of my high school classmates were not

economically affluent, they had to work, they were pregnant and had to

work part-time. It turned out they finished undergraduate education, but I

didn't. ... They were nice to me when we got together. But when we

talked, they all had a university life to talk about. Maybe I never have a

bachelor's degree, so I really want it badly. I think a bachelor's degree is

very common in the society. When I was a little girl (in Malaysia), a (high

school) diploma was common. But when I came to the U.S., I found a

bachelor's degree is common. Many people have degrees in masters or

Ph.D. My husband and his sisters all got masters. ... Then when I started to go to college, I found going to college acculturates people and makes people more knowledgeable. That makes me feel like I'm different from people who have never attended college. I have learned so much at college.)

Charlene's perception of higher education reflected the value of education in Confucian society, which venerates book learning as a worthy goal in itself and honors scholars as the highest social hierarchy (Chang, 2003; Wang, 2006). Thus, in Confusion heritage culture, education represents not only the path to skills that bring financial security or success, but also social status as well as cultural approbation. For Charlene, attending college advanced her social status and acculturated her into certain dispositions that make her a member of the social networks surrounded by family members and friends of degree holders. Hence, Charlene was willing to transgress the gender expectation of her home community to pursue a bachelor's degree for she perceived not only the monetary value but also the socio-cultural values attached to the degree.

My analysis in this section suggests that, under the influence of their heritage culture, students who enrolled at RHC with the academic goal of getting transferred to four-year universities perceived attending RHC as a pathway to obtain the values conferred by a degree in higher education in the U.S. Hence, they enthusiastically appropriated the academic identity underwritten in the Academic Discourse, even if such apparent complicity might have conflicted with

their home- or community-based identities. Nevertheless, as I will show in later when I discuss the students' ESL learning experience in Ms. Jones' classroom, their appropriation of an academic identity was not without negotiation.

Furthermore, rather than forming a collective college experience, for students with academically oriented goals, the values they attached to higher education and the tension that they had to struggle in order to acquire the mainstream Discourse of the college were not all the same, but were shaped by the social identities in their different life worlds outside college.

Students with non-academic goals.

Since community colleges are recognized as legitimate sites for pursuing vocational training and community education, some of the students in Ms. Jones' class did come with non-academic goals, such as advancing professional skills and polishing language skills for daily literacy. For example, Vincent, an international student who previously worked as a graphic designer and film editor in China, clearly enrolled with a vocational-oriented goal of advancing his professional skills. At the time we met, Vincent had finished a certificate in graphic design from the Art Division of RHC and was trying to fulfill the General Education courses required for an Associate degree of Art (AA degree) from RHC. Vincent's goal was to fulfill these requirements as soon as possible so that he could get hired in the U.S. job market or in his economically rapidly growing homeland—China. He perceived the academic courses required in General Education, such as ESL, math, history, and biology, as simply a requirement that

wouldn't really advance his vocational skills. When asked about his goal at RHC and future plans, Vincent said:

YC: 你可不可以 ▪ 一下你在RHC的計畫是什麼? 就是你剛才才 ▪ 嘛, 你就是要拿一個AA degree. (Could you tell me what your goal is at RHC?

You just told me that you would like to get an AA degree, right?)

M:對. 我已經把那個..呃..graphic design 的 certificate 已經完成了, 我現在就是趕快把general education 的課拿完就行了, 而且要快, 因為學費很貴而且那些課好像也.. 對我不太.. 就是對我未來的就業不太有幫助。 (Yes. Um.. I have completed a certificate of graphic design.

Now I just have to finish the required courses for General Education. I have to finish them soon because the tuition is expensive and those courses seem to .. they don't seem to .. enhance my occupational skills much.)

YC:然後, 拿完degree之後你就會~(So, after you get the degree, you will~)

Vincent: 之後如果在美國找到工作會 去試一下, 就是當它是實習, 然後我去累積一定的..比如, 比如 ▪ 工作經驗, 之後我就再回國去找一份工作..這樣我會..比較簡單. (After I get the degree, I will try to get a job in the U.S. I regard it as an internship and I can accumulate some work experiences in the U.S. Then, I will return to get a job in my homeland. .. In this way, it will be easier for me.)

As a matter of fact, in addition to attending classes at RHC, Vincent also worked as a freelance graphic designer as well as a part-time art teacher for Chinese ethnic business. These work experiences outside college reinforced the satisfaction he gained from an identity as a professional artist. Given his vocational-oriented goal at RHC, Vincent commented on his experience in Ms. Jones' class as the following:

Vincent: ..這個我覺得功課呢,, 我是那麼覺得啊,, 如果對於一個學生他是專門學英文的, 就 他其他課什麼都沒有拿,, 就拿Jones 這門課, 這些功課, 是正好。而且他能 完全吸收, 但是如果 對於 一個學生他又要拿其他課, 是就除了課 習得的, 還拿其他課的話,, 我覺得他沒有足 的時間吸收。(Um.. I think the homework, I think the homework is fine for a student who just focus on Ms. Jones' class and on learning ESL without taking care of other course work. But for students who have to take other courses, I don't think they will have enough time to devote to Ms. Jones' class.)

YC: 那對你而言呢? (What about you?)

Vincent: 對我而言, 我吸收不了。如果我不拿那兩節專業課, 就是除了 Jones 之外的那兩節課我不拿, 有可能這門課對我進 的很快, 但是現在我只要 pass 這門課就好了。(It's too much for me. If I don't have to take the other two vocational courses on top of Ms. Jones' class, Ms. Jones' class might help me to improve my English a lot. But now, I just want to pass this class.)

It appears that Vincent prioritized the development of his vocational skills over the development of academic skills, such as learning English for academic writing. He expected that his college experience in the U.S. would advance his professional skills, carrying the instrumental value of getting a better job and gaining financial stability in the future. Furthermore, similar to his other Chinese peers, Vincent perceived that a college degree and work experience earned in the U.S. could have the symbolic value in the westernized China, which gives higher social status to people who study in English-speaking countries, such as Britain or the U.S. In fact, in China, there is a growing group of social elite referred as “sea turtle”, which is a pun on *haiwai guilai*, meaning “returned from overseas” (Liu & Hewitt, 2008). Drawn by the rise of political influence and the economic boom of China, those who studied and worked overseas are returning to their homeland. Their identity as “bridgemen” and “modern citizens” usually designates them as social elite in a rapidly westernized China. For Vincent as well as many of his Chinese peers such as Sarah and Sheena, a better future didn’t necessarily lie in the U.S. The better future might lie in his homeland where his education and work experience in the U.S. not only could earn him a decent job, but also could assist him to climb up the social ladder.

Given his perception on future opportunity and his vocational-oriented goal, the Discourse that Vincent participated in within his life world outside college was in overt conflict with the mainstream Discourse of RHC; therefore, he had to push against the Discourse promoted at RHC in order to maintain his own sense of who he was as a student. He was conservative in complying with the academic identity that Ms. Jones was

trying to shape, and, as he said in the interview, he just wanted to engage enough to pass the class. In Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL block, he was observed to be late or absent from the class many times and submit homework late for obscure reasons. He was lukewarm about advancing his academic writing skills and even got caught asking one of his English-speaking friends to "help" him too much on his writing assignments. Although I observed him speaking up actively in the class, he frequently evoked in the class a jocular and non-academic mood rather than an academic one or a deepened understanding of the academic topic at hand. For example, when the class read a text entitled "Handling Culture Shock" from the textbook, which described the different stages of culture shock that ESL students might go through when living in another culture. Ms. Jones used a married couple's transition from the honeymoon stage to the fighting stage as an analogy to the different stages of cultural shock that foreign student might go through. While Ms. Jones was speaking to the whole class about the quarrels and fights that married couples might have after their honeymoon stage, Vincent engaged a few of his Chinese peers at his table in a side-note on the academic topic discussed at hand.

Vincent: [speak softly to his student peers] 所以我覺得同居比較好 (That's why I think couples should live together before they get married) [students at his table laughed] 同居的英文怎麼 ▫ (How do you say that in English?)

Mathew: 不知道 (I don't know.)

S1: 可能是 live together (It might be "live together") [the group laughed louder]

Vincent: ▫ 一下 ▫ 一下 (Look it up, look it up in a dictionary) [Vincent tried to look it up in his electronic dictionary]

As Vincent engaged a few of his peers in a playful mood with a mix of Chinese and English that deviated from the academic nature of the topic that Ms. Jones was engaging the class in, their laughter drew the attention of Ms. Jones, who attempted to turn Vincent and her peers' jocular mood into a teachable moment in the classroom.

Ms. Jones: What are you looking at, Vincent? [the class laughed]

Vincent: Uh, uhn, the word.

Ms. Jones: Which word?

Vincent: Uh, uh, .. about a couple, .. uhm.. before married, before they get married, they live together. [the class laughed out loud]

Ms. Jones: There's no word, we have no word for that.

Vincent: Oh, really? Nothing like they live together? [the class laughed even louder]

Ms. Jones: Well .. actually~ [Ms. Jones wrote on the board "shacking up"]

Shacking up.

S2: What does that mean?

Ms. Jones: This is a term, um, I happen to.. I like to listen to talk radio, not music, but talk, and one of the them I listen to, the person on the show, she believes that you should get married before you live together. She is a strong believer of that, which is many Americans, uh, when I said many, that's not necessarily true. But because many sounds like 70%, that's not true, it's more like 30 or 40% might live with the person before they get married. Now, in her term, it's called "shacking up." [students chuckled.] Now it's a slang term. You're shacking up

with someone, you're pretending to be married, but you're not married. And so, a little extra information for you.

As shown in the above excerpts of classroom talk, using Chinese, Vincent, first, drew from his ethnic cultural identity to engage a few of his Chinese student peers in an exchange that strayed from the academic topic at hand. Seeing Vincent and his peers' interaction as playful and disruptive, Ms. Jones attempted to turn their jocular mood into an academic mood (e.g. "What are you looking at, Vincent? "Which word?" "There's no word, we have no word for that.")). Nevertheless, Vincent's subsequent question (i.e., "Oh, really? Nothing like they live together?") overturned Ms. Jones' academic agenda and put the whole class into a jocular and non-academic mood. Pushed by Vincent's question, Ms. Jones referred to a radio talk show to introduce "shacking up" as informal slang usage rather than formal academic vocabulary, and commented on her response to Vincent's question as "a little extra information for you," that is, off the main academic topic. Thus, while Vincent did attempt to perform his student identity by participating and engaging in classroom talk as Ms. Jones expected, his participation frequently displayed him as a playful student who responded with little regard to the academic task at hand. When asked to comment on Vincent in the interview, Ms. Jones said,

I think [Vincent] is also a less academic individual. He's somebody who wants to engage more, but struggles with the vocabulary. I think he is going to be in trouble in the next level. ... He's got some good ideas, and some of his ideas in some of his essays were pretty interesting, but he couldn't communicate it, and defend it or support it adequately, and I think that's going to get him into trouble.

Hence, although Ms. Jones regarded Vincent as a student “who wants to engage more” and who has “got some good ideas,” she also commented on him as someone bound for trouble in an institution that values the Academic Discourse that fits an academic trajectory – even though as in the excerpt above, he was indeed developing his English vocabulary and making some effort to do so, such as wanting to look in a dictionary.

Vincent’s partial compliance to the academic identity underwritten in the college and classroom was shared by his young Chinese peer, Mathew, who appeared to prioritize the goal of developing English for functional literacy over academic transfer. When asked about his college goals, Mathew said,

YC: Then what is your goal here?

Mathew: My goal is, first of all, polish my English skill, and secondly, I’m trying to..., you know, to decide my major, and..if I could, I think I will transfer to another university.

YC: Ok, so your goal here, do you want to get an AA degree?

Mathew: AA degree.. I don’t know .. but maybe.

YC: Maybe?

Mathew: But not now, I don’t even think about it. Right now my goal is to improve my English skills.

YC: And trying to transfer to 4-year universities, or?

Mathew: Right now is just only try to improve my English skill and decide my major, that's it. Because English is the most important thing now, you cannot live in the United States without English. 來這兒一開始(When you start your life here,) the requirement is English skills, right? I don't think I am going to stay in the Chinese community forever. I'm going to move to another state. I'm planning .. like maybe after I transfer to university. I don't think I am going to stay here forever. So, I want to improve my English.

Although Mathew did not exclude the possibility of getting transferred to a university in the future, he did not appear to be enthusiastic about getting himself ready for such transfer by taking transfer-required courses as the other transfer-bound students did. Since registering at RHC three years before, he took only ESL courses without attending any other academic courses to fulfill the transfer requirements. While I spent much time after the class in the Learning Assistance Center interviewing or tutoring the students and typing my field notes, I seldom saw him studying or counseling tutors there. Sarah and Sheena even commented on him as a "weird guy," who vanished from the school right after class. In an untaped conversation, I asked Mathew why he hadn't taken action to get transfer-prepared since he was 22 years old. Mathew told me that although his parents expected him to go to a university, he was debating about it. In fact, he gained more satisfaction from his leadership role in a church located in the Chinese ethnic community and said that he might consider devoting himself to a religious career. Since both of his parents were devoted church members, taking up a religious career was regarded as another pathway for Mathew to fulfill his parents' expectations. It appears

that Mathew, like Sharon and Sheena, drew from Confusion cultural value to construe his college goal, perceiving obtaining a degree in higher education as a way to abide with the filial piety and fulfill parental expectation. Nevertheless, he had the leverage to negotiate with such home-based Discourse by foregrounding the role he took in the ethnic community organization. Thus, as he said in the interview, rather than thinking about getting a higher education degree or transferring to a university at this moment, he perceived enhancing English language skills as his primary goal at RHC in order to reach out to the ethnic enclave and to be accepted in mainstream society—a goal, in fact, shared by many immigrants (Tse, 2001).

Prioritizing learning ESL for daily literacy over academic literacy, Mathew appropriated with ambivalence the academic identity that Ms. Jones invited him to take on. In the interview, while acknowledging the importance of enhancing English proficiency in his immigrant life, Mathew also complained about the early class time and grumbled about the heavy workload in Ms. Jones' class. In the classroom, he was observed to attend the class regularly and submit homework on time. When prompted to answer questions about the academic topic at hand, Mathew usually was able to respond properly as shown in the following excerpt, when Ms. Jones invited the class to identify the reasons why people would like to move to an eco-village based on a video clip they watched in the classroom.

Ms. Jones: Uh, Mathew, did you come up with a different one?

Mathew: Uh, they moved there because .. uh .. the community is small and there are less people being there, and they get to know each other.

Ms. Jones: Ok, so to get to know the neighbors, right?

Students: Uh, hum.

Ms. Jones: So, it was important for that lady, she said at least she knows the people who live down her street and in this case she got to know them more.

Although Mathew was as capable of engaging in the interactional routines that Ms. Jones orchestrated as many of his student peers, when failing to do so at times, he was blamed for attending the he class unprepared or unengaged because Ms. Jones assumed him over-devoted to his church activities. For example, when the class worked on a task, learning to infer meaning from a text they read, Mathew not only failed to display such an academic skill; his lack of response to Ms. Jones' question was read as an indication of his lack of engagement.

Ms. Jones: So Mathew, what did your table talk about? [long pause] What can you infer about the relationship between Native Americans and the nature?

Mathew: [Stammer]

Ms. Jones: Were you sleeping while your table was talking?

Students: [laughed]

Mathew: [reading a sentence from the textbook in murmur]

Ms. Jones: What?

Mathew: I'm not sure how XXXXX are related .

Ms. Jones: Did you do your reading?

Mathew: Yes I did.

Ms. Jones: Your brain doesn't work right now?

Students: (giggled).

Mathew: They're trying to explain~

Ms. Jones: Ok, "inference" means.. Hold on. We will come back question one later, look at question three. Maybe question three is an easier question to start with.

As the above excerpt shows, Mathew's lack of response to Ms. Jones' question was treated as his lack of engagement in the class (e.g., "Were you sleeping while your table was talking?" "Your brain doesn't work right now?"), rather than a sign of needing help to master the academic skill of inferring meaning from texts. In the interview, when asked to comment on Mathew's performance and interaction in the class, Ms. Jones attributed his lack of engagement in the class to his zealous involvement with the church, which preoccupied his time and energy. She said,

At the term time when [Mathew] and I talked, he told me he was very active in the leadership role in his church, which is a Chinese church, so he's not.. so he spent a lot of time, which is good, I'm not knocking his religion, his activities, you know, but he needs to balance it out with school, and I'm trying to explain him "I'm sure your pasture will understand that you need to devote more time to your studies, uhm.. because you're a college student." So, I don't know that happened or not over the course of the academic term time when we talked, but uhm.. he didn't.. in my opinion, improved after the mid-term time, you know, I think it was still a constant struggle for him to stay on top of things, and he didn't always come to class prepared. ... uhm, I don't see his lack of interaction as a

shyness issue, like I think Sarah is one of your people, right? and Sarah I think she's just shy, but, you know, watching Mathew interacting with people in other situations, like the party or after class or something, so I don't think that's the case with him. I think sometimes he didn't prepare as well as he could have, and so~ he may have come to class with the homework done, but you know, like "I have done the homework," but that doesn't necessary really being helpful, well, I put in the blank, so that's just my impression with Mathew, that he is not a shy individual, but he wasn't really always prepared or always awake to engage the classes as much as he might have like.

Nevertheless, when Mathew's lack of ability to master an academic skill was interpreted as an indication of his lack of engagement, it was not surprising to see Mathew distanced from the academic identity that Ms. Jones attempted to socialize him into, commenting in the interview on some of the work Ms. Jones assigned to the class as "not really helpful to improving [his] English." In the middle of the semester, while the other three students who enrolled in Ms. Jones' class with non-academic goals or whom Ms. Jones saw as "less academic" dropped the class, Mathew found his way to learn English without fully committing to an academic identity by assigning the Level Four ESL Block as a non-credit course, relieving himself from the pressure of fully fitting into the Academic Discourse.

My analyses in this section suggest that the socio-cultural identities the students undertook in their life worlds outside college shaped their college goals and experiences in college. Under the influence of their heritage cultural values (e.g., the Confusion

heritage cultural value regarding education and family obligation), the role expectations of son/daughter and married woman within the family domain, and the satisfactions the students gained from their roles in public domains, such as in the workplace and ethnic community organizations, appeared to shape their sense of who they are and their reaction to who they are summoned to be in the college. These role expectations could place constraints on students' goal attainment (e.g., as in the cases of Virginia and Mathew), but could also be turned into affordances that drive them to march on the college pathway (e.g., as in the cases of Charlene, Sheena, and Sarah), depending on the perceived values the subject attached to college education and the ways these values fit with the cultural norms or role expectations in their life worlds outside college. As such, the community college ESL students whom I studied were members of multiple communities. While they were invited to take on an academic identity in the college classroom, they also attempted to accommodate the sense of who they were in their life worlds outside college. The mainstream Discourse of the college and the Discourses that the students participate in within their life worlds outside college co-existed in tension and intersected in complicated ways to shape students' college goals and experiences.

Students' Investment in English Language Learning

Recent research in second language learning (Golden, 2001; He, 2004; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000) suggests that, although dominant social institutions, such as schools, have the power to impose identity categories through teachers' cultural models of schooling, interaction with students, curriculum design, material choice, and so on, L2 students are complex social beings who do not unidirectionally assimilate into the

cultural norms and social positions that dominant social institutions attempt to impose on them. As human agents, L2 students mobilize within the multiple Discourses of their life worlds to negotiate with the mainstream Discourse of larger social institutions and assign meanings and values to their language learning activities at school. For example, in McKay and Wong's (1996) study, the Chinese immigrant adolescents enrolling in a U.S. junior high school were found to draw from the gender discourse, model minority discourse, and Chinese cultural nationalist discourse valued in their life worlds to construe their school identity and their investment in learning English. It is found that individual students' investments in the skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing were selective, and different skills had different values in relation to the discourses that the student wished to foreground. Hence, L2 students' investment in learning the target language at school is closely tied to the kind of membership they desire to affiliate with both inside and outside school. That is, while L2 students perceive the difference in language and culture as barriers they must overcome at school, they also try to accommodate their prior language, culture, and identity by selectively learning English and other cultural features of the American mainstream.

In this section, I argue that the community college ESL students I studied were human agents who participated in school-based language learning activities with negotiation. While they perceived learning English as essential for their future academic or career success, their investment in learning the English language was selective, shaped by their perceived goals and the kind of socio-cultural group membership they wished to align with outside the college classroom. Thus, in Ms. Jones' Level four ESL Block,

while the ESL students aspired to learn English as well as to learn to become students in American classrooms, and thus were willing to comply with the Academic Discourse promoted by in the classroom, at times they deviated from this particular combination of saying-being-doing-and-valuing promoted by the instructor in order to accommodate their prior language and culture when learning ESL in the classroom. In the next chapter, I will show how communication via networked computers, while in the broader context of performing school tasks, was especially conducive to such accommodation.

Students' conformity to Academic Discourse.

As my analyses in the previous chapter showed, in Ms. Jones' Level four ESL Block, Ms. Jones attempted to socialize the students into Academic Discourse by inviting them to write in a particular language variety, take on particular student dispositions, and think in particular cultural frames. Recognizing the value of higher education, many of the focal students tended to comply with this Academic Discourse for they perceived the English language and the American classroom culture as barriers they had to overcome in order to achieve academic or career success. Conformity to Academic Discourse was particularly salient to students enrolled with the goal of academic transfer. As shown in my analyses of the students' interaction with Ms. Jones in the classroom in the previous section, students with the goal of academic transfer such as Sarah, Sheena, and Charlene usually did not deviate from the academic topics or the interactional routines that Ms. Jones orchestrated in order to enact the identity of a good academic student. Furthermore, these students prioritized the learning of written English and appeared to associate learning to write English in a particular style with their academic future in U.S.

universities. Commenting on her learning experience in Ms. Jones' class, Sarah said,

YC: So .. how do you like the class ESL 33A?

Sarah: I think it's useful. Ms. Jones is a good teacher, and she taught.. teaches us a lot of things, like grammar, writing skills. I think it's good.

YC: So, what do you think you are learning from this class?

Sarah: I think grammar and especially writing skills, like how to organize an essay, uh~ paragraph with a topic sentence, and we need to have specific examples to support our idea.

YC: Wow! You learn that well.

Sarah: Yes, because I think writing is very, very useful. In the future we have to write an essay, a research essay, so writing is very useful, important, especially for ESL students.

Sarah's orientation to writing is seen to be grounded in the academic endeavor. In a similar vein, despite being rated by Ms. Jones as a low-achieving student in the class, Sheena also associated learning to write in English with her future academic success and commented positively on the progress in writing she made in Ms. Jones' class.

YC: What do you think you are learning from Ms. Jones' class?

Sheena: Um~ writing an essay. .. This is a level 4 class. In level 3, the longest paragraph I wrote, they just have 20 sentences. And then here in 33A, the longest I write are four pages now. It's twice longer than (what I could write) in the level 3 class. So I, I think my writing skill is better than last year. ... Also [Ms. Jones] gave us feedback. She checked and

corrected our writing and asked us to rewrite. If I can write more again and again, I can do better, and then maybe after I get into the university, I can write a good essay the first time. I don't have to rewrite so many times.

It appears that students with the goal of academic transfer perceived acquiring the kind of academic written language use valued at RHC as a way to overcome the linguistic barriers they would encounter in their future academic life. Thus, they strove hard to master the particular kind of written language that Ms. Jones promoted in the class. As Sarah said,

Although some people think [Ms. Jones] is so strict, but I think strict is good, it makes us improve. Although sometimes I feel stressed about why does the teacher give us so many writing assignments, although I complained, I know this is good for us to improve (our writing).

Likewise, Virginia commented on her ESL learning experience in Ms. Jones' class:

Sometimes, I feel it's difficult, like yesterday [Ms. Jones] said, "you cannot choose your topic (in the essay quiz)" At first, we thought we can choose any of the topics, but then she said, "No, I'm going to choose the topic for you and then you write." I feel, "Oh, my god~" but then I said, "it's a challenge to do things more difficult, at a higher level, because we're going to do that in other classes, and other classes won't be easy. So it's better to take some challenge.

For Virginia and her student peers who planned to transfer to four-year universities, an investment in the written language variety promoted by Ms. Jones was perceived as an

investment in the academic identity that they desired to align with.

While the students also showed their compliance to Academic Discourse by attending the class regularly and submitting homework on time, a significant way for them to represent themselves as desirable students was speaking up in the class since, as shown in her classroom talk and course documents presented in Chapter 4, Ms. Jones not only verbally encouraged the students to do so, but also highlighted such behavior in her mid-term assessment and course syllabus. Being participatory in classroom talk was a particularly important strategy for the students with non-academic goals in order for them to perform their student identity--for the reason that the written language variety promoted by Ms. Jones didn't match their future goals and, to perform their student identity, they were less likely to rely on acquiring such written language.

For students with non-academic goals, although learning English at school was important in their immigrant life or career development, it was not necessarily associated with learning to write academic essays. For example, when asked about why he attends this class, Vincent said,

因為我想...就是兩個原因嘛! 第一個原因..我要pass一節課. 要趕快把 General Education 的課拿完, 然後第二個想把English學好, 就以後工作還什麼的也可能用到。 (There are two reasons why I took this class. First of all, I need to pass this class so that I can finish my General Education. Secondly, I would like to improve my English language. I might need it when I start to work in the future.)

Given the mismatch between the kind of English language skill that Vincent valued and

the kind of language variety promoted in Ms. Jones' classroom, Vincent, although recognizing the importance of learning English, didn't appropriate the kind written language use promoted by Ms. Jones as enthusiastically as his transfer-bound peers. He commented that writing essays was the most detestable task in Ms. Jones' class and showed a little interest in sharpening his skill in academic writing:

我覺得這門課對我來太重了太難了，特別是寫essay，我最討厭上課寫essay。...就是寫不好啊。因為我對寫比較沒概念，所以對臨場發揮方面就更難了。...有可能對英文好的同學他們沒所謂，但相對我是個英文不好的，我就覺得，我有準備，但是有準備也就是這樣，沒什麼太大的差別。

(I think this course is too much and too difficult for me, especially writing essays. I hate writing essays in the class. ... Because I really can't write well. I have only a little sense of how to write a good essay. So, improvised essay is even more difficult for me. ... For those who are good in English, they probably aren't bothered about writing essays as much as I am, but for me, my English is not good; I feel it doesn't matter if I study for it. It doesn't make a difference anyway.)

Likewise, Mathew, while perceiving learning English as his primary goal at RHC, tended to depreciate the kind of written language use that Ms. Jones was trying to socialize him into. Unlike Sheena, Sarah, and Virginia, who placed value on the hard work that Ms. Jones put them through to improve their writing skills, Mathew commented on his learning experience in Ms. Jones' class as follows:

She [gave] a lot of things in a week, and sometimes she had us do two or

three things per day. I think it's too much because we have to do vocabulary journal, TV journal. I mean she [had] us write these two things every week, and then she also [gave] us some assignments, like WebBoard and some summaries, essays and grammar exercises. That's too much for me.

In addition to grumbling about the large amount of work, Mathew also perceived improvised writing as “real writing,” and criticized the process-writing approach and some of the writing assignments Ms. Jones designed to help students master the particular writing styles valued in the class as “not related to writing.” As Mathew complained about the amount and the nature of homework assigned by Ms. Jones, he was actually impugning her for focusing on developing a certain kind of written language use since these assignments were designed to develop students' writing skills in academic settings. Hence, for non-academically oriented students, acquiring the written language forms promoted in the class was a mismatch with the value they placed on learning English. And, as indicated above, rather than relying on writing essays in the designated format to meet Ms. Jones's expectations for being students, they tended to rely on being participatory in the class to do so. When asked about his classroom participation, Vincent said,

YC: 你覺得你在Ms. Jones上課的時候， 你覺得你是一個很踴躍發言的人的嗎?或是還算滿活躍的學生嗎? (Do you think you are a vocal or active student in Ms. Jones' class?)

Vincent: 我覺得很好。因為我有問題我就問， 我沒有放在心裡面或是

或覺得我不好意思問我沒有， 我都我都會問的. ... 我想有問題就問嘛!

我就是來學的嘛! 你有什麼問題憋在心裡面或是不好意思問..沒有必

要。就 ▪ 美國人老師也喜歡你有問題..沒問題, 我這。 (I think I'm fine.

I don't feel embarrassed about asking questions. I asked questions in the

class and I don't keep the questions to myself. I know I'm here to learn, so

I don't feel embarrassed about asking questions. Also American teachers

like students ask questions. So, I have no problem speaking up in the class.)

From Vincent's perspective, being vocal in the class had the social meaning of pleasing the American teacher and presenting himself as an active classroom participant and eager learner. Thus, despite his heritage culture discouraging students from vocalizing their own opinion in the classroom and his oral language still showing major structural flaws and a heavy accent, Vincent was willing to take the risk of violating his heritage culture and losing face to speak up in front of the class. I noticed, in fact, that he was one of the most talkative students in the class. Vincent also rated himself as making more progress in speaking than in writing. For Vincent, an investment in spoken language was an investment in student identity.

Students' accommodation of their prior language and culture in classroom discourse.

Although the students conformed to Academic Discourse with the intention of representing themselves as desirable in the classroom community, they also tried to accommodate their prior language and culture in the classroom discourse while they learned ESL and how to become students in the American classroom. The students' accommodation of their prior language and culture could be shown by a) publically

defying the cultural frame that Ms. Jones attempted to socialize them into, b) enacting the good student identity in their own cultural way, c) honoring their own cultural practices in the classroom talk, and d) speaking in their first language in the classroom.

The students' public defiance to the cultural frame that Ms. Jones attempted to socialize them into can be shown in the interaction between Ms. Jones and Rodriguez, a Hispanic student in the scenario of the American rodeo versus Mexican horse tripping presented in the previous chapter. As shown in the following excerpt, while Ms. Jones attempted to acculturate the students into the American value of men and animal relationship, Rodriguez, stood up to defend the cultural practice of Mexican horse tripping, and implicitly his heritage cultural identity.

Ms. Jones: So, when you have cultural diversity, some of it is easy to understand and accept, but some of it is like .. I don't understand that, I can't understand that. So I CAN'T understand why it's fun to hurt an animal, and maybe have to kill the animal, or like the bull fighting, I don't understand that.

Rodriguez: The power of the men with the animal. That's the whole **big picture**.

Ms. Jones: **I don't get it**. So, it's hard for me to understand THAT. Because in MY cultural bringing, because my personal idea and also my cultural idea of animal and how animals are treated going against another culture and how animals are treated.

One notices that as Ms. Jones attempted to acculturate the students into the American

cultural frame by devaluing the Mexican practice of horse tripping (e.g., “So I CAN’T understand why it’s fun to hurt an animal, and maybe have to kill the animal, or like the bull fighting, I don’t understand that”), Rodriguez, representing himself an expert of Hispanic culture, attempted to defend his own cultural practice by bluntly defying Ms. Jones’ American cultural frame (i.e., “The power of the men with the animal. That’s the whole **big picture.**”) His intention, however, was not elaborated, but immediately silenced in Ms. Jones’ subsequent response, which overlapped with Rodriguez’s talk (e.g., “**I don’t get it.** So, it’s hard for me to understand THAT.) Hence, while students’ public defiance of the teacher rarely took place in the classroom discourse, when it did occur, it was usually dismissed and silenced by the teacher as the above snapshot shows.

For the predominantly Asian students in the class, their heritage culture prompted them to view the teacher as an authority figure who tells them what to do and imparts truths. A public defiance of the teacher is regarded not only as inappropriate and disrespectful to the teacher, but also threatening to one’s own face. As Liu (2001) notes, in Confusion heritage societies, students are not expected to speak up in the classroom, and they ask questions only when they are required to do so. A good student is not necessarily someone who is eagerly engaged in classroom talk, but rather a polite listener and quiet absorber of the knowledge imparted by their teacher. Hence, instead of speaking against the teacher or actively bidding for the floor to talk, the Asian students in Ms. Jones’ class usually spoke up only when they were prompted by Ms. Jones, as shown in many of the experts of classroom discourse presented in the previous sections, such as the following:

Ms. Jones: What can you infer about the relationship about people to nature? ..

Sarah.

Sarah: Um.. they accept things that happen.

Ms. Jones: They accept things that happen instead of trying to fight them, ok?

Students: Um hum

Ms. Jones: Good. What else about nature? .. Ann.

In the interview, when asked if she considered herself an active participant in Ms. Jones' class, Sarah said,

I listen to the teacher very carefully, I didn't distract her, but I am not a person who likes to talk, especially in English. Because I think I lack of confidence in speaking English. Because in our class, all the classmates, except me, they have come here for a long time. I'm afraid my English is not good enough, and I'm so shocking so I lack of confidence. ... Also in China, they tell us to ask question, but it's not like an obligation .. we don't do that often in China.

Sheena also said,

YC: What about in the classroom? Do you think yourself an active participant?

Sheena: Uhm .. I don't talk too much, but I listen to the teacher and the classmates carefully.

YC: Why is that?

Sheena: Um..sometimes I am not sure about the answer of the question, and I'm afraid I am wrong.

In his study on Asian students' silence in American classrooms, Liu (2002) identifies five factors that were related to Asian students' silence in American college classrooms: cognitive factors (e.g., prior learning experience, background knowledge, or mental readiness), pedagogical factors (e.g., teaching styles, participation as a course requirement, and opportunities to speak up), affective factors (e.g., anxiety, motivation, or risk-taking), sociocultural factors (e.g., facework, showing respect for others by keeping silent, or the norm of being a good listener as a good student), and linguistic factors (e.g., proficiency in the target language, communicative competence, or accent). Sarah and Sheena's talk about their inactive participation in the classroom talk indicates that, in addition to teaching styles (e.g. "in China, they tell us to ask question, but it's not like an obligation .. we don't do that often in China"), affective factors (e.g. "I think I lack of confidence in speaking English"), and linguistic factors (e.g., "I'm afraid my English is not good enough "), sociocultural factors (e.g. " I listen to the teacher very carefully, I didn't distract her" and "I listen to the teacher and the classmates carefully, but I don't talk too much") were mentioned by both Sarah and Sheena to explain their student performance in the classroom. Hence, while enacting the identity of good academic student promoted by Ms. Jones, Asian students such as Sarah, Sheena, and Charlene also drew from their heritage cultural value to perform their student identity—an act that silently accommodates their heritage cultural practice in the American classroom.

Although most Asian students tended to enact their cultural identity through silence, at times, their accommodation of the prior culture and language in the classroom were vocalized by subtly honoring/preserving their own cultural practices in classroom talk. For example, in a class task that required the students to report their findings on interviewing people from countries other than their own country of origin, Tina, a Chinese student, reported that she learned from her Korean interviewee that Koreans celebrate Teacher's Day and then asked if Americans celebrate Teacher's Day.

Tina: About the Father's day and Mother's day, which is coming, right? Koreans have the same day, they call it the Parents' Day, on May 8th, on the same day. And also they have the Teacher's Day, which is after the Parent's Day, on May 15th. I don't know if American has the Teacher's Day.

Students: No, no, not in America. Only in China. [students snickered and spoke simultaneously]

Vincent: In China, we have a Lady holiday.

Ms. Jones: Lady holiday?

Students: Yes, Yes, Lady holiday. Oh, Yes. We celebrate for women. [many students spoke at the same time.]

Ms. Jones: Ok, Lady's Day.

Vincent: We also have a Children's Day.

Tina: Yes, Children's Day. We have an international Children's Day. We celebrate for children.

Ms. Jones: Children's Day? No, we don't have a Children's Day.

Students: [students laughed and talked indistinguishable]

Vincent: But I think it's the most common holiday, I mean the Children's Day.

Ms. Jones: No, Japan has a Children's Day.

Cindy: But you celebrate XXX Day, right?

Ms. Jones: No.

Cindy: We have that in Philippine. [Students laughed and spoke simultaneously]

Ms. Jones: Hey, hey, hey, let's back to Tina.

As indicated in the above excerpt, while the students snickered at the fact that Americans do not celebrate Teacher's Day and only Chinese celebrate Teacher's Day, Vincent stepped in and proudly told Ms. Jones that "in China, we have a Lady Holiday" and "we also have a Children's Day." Vincent's use of first person plural to evoke his ethnic cultural identity was further corroborated by his Chinese peers, claiming "Yes, Children's Day. We have an international Children's Day. We celebrate for children." Vincent and his peer Chinese students honored their cultural practices and implicitly their cultural identity. Their responses, although not bluntly disavowed by Ms. Jones as shown in her interaction with Rodriguez in the Mexican horse tripping scene, were eased by re-directing the class to the academic topic at hand as Ms. Jones announced "Hey, hey, hey, let's back to Tina."

Since language use is always tied to one's representation of self, students' switching codes from English to their first language in the classroom discourse can be interpreted as another way they accommodated their cultural identity. In this classroom, however, students' code switching usually took place as "underlife" in the classroom as shown in

Vincent's interaction with his student peers in the "Shacking up" scene that I presented in the previous section. In particular, Chinese-speaking students were found to speak with each other in Chinese when they were put to work in small groups or pairs. The topic of their talk could be related to the academic tasks at hand or simply teasing each other. They usually spoke in Chinese in soft voices and then switched back to English when they noticed Ms. Jones was approaching. On a few occasions, when Ms. Jones went out of the classroom in the middle of the class, the Chinese students would turn to speak in Chinese with each other until Ms. Jones returned. For example, when Ann, a Chinese student, was about to give an oral report on her interview with an Argentine, Vincent interrupted her report and asked Ms. Jones a question.

Vincent: I have a question about the Armenian.

Ms. Jones: What about the Armenian.

Vincent: The Armenian is .. belong .. which country.

Students: [spoke simultaneously] Russia. They're not a country. They are orphan.

Ms. Jones: [Tried to locate Armenia on a world map on the wall] Armenia, where is Armenia, right there, can you see? Green, green and this little yellow between? Right here.

Students: Small

Ms. Jones: Yes, it's a small country. They were kind of controlled by the Soviets, they were part of Soviet Union before. And then before Soviet Union, they always had conflicts with Turkey. And so, recently, about last week, uhm..one moment, hold that thought. [Ms. Jones went out the classroom to get a poster from the

board in the corridor.]

Vincent: 我救了你啊！(I saved you!)

Students: [laughed]

Ann: 謝啦，我好緊張喔。(Thanks a lot, I was so nervous.)

Vincent: 還好啦，就慢慢講吧，我們會幫你，都是自己人。(It's Ok, take your time and just be yourself. We are in-group members and we will help.)

As Vincent and Ann switched the classroom language from English to Chinese, the class started to chat about their experience of giving an oral report in the class in Chinese until Ms. Jones returned with the poster to talk about the genocide in Armenia. One can notice from the above excerpt that, speaking in Chinese, Vincent and his Chinese peers not only turned the classroom into an informal discourse site, but also affirmed their shared ethnic cultural identity as he tried to comfort his peers and claim their in-group membership. Thus, while English was the legitimate language in the classroom and speaking English was supposed to be the discourse norm, students' switch of code from English to their first language when Ms. Jones was "absent" from the conversation not only indicated their nonconformity to the normative student behaviors highlighted in the Academic Discourse, but also had the social function of accommodating their shared language and culture and affirming their shared cultural identity in the classroom community. As indicated above, however, such displays were kept "underground."

Conclusion

As Gee (1996) suggests, Discourses are multiple and different Discourses an individual acquires usually co-exist in tension; "[the] conflict is between who I'm

summoned to be in the new Discourse and who I am in other Discourses that overly conflict with the Discourse.” (p.135) My research indicates that, under the influence of their heritage culture (e.g. the influence of Confusion ideology), the community college ESL students I studied were optimistic about the value of U.S. education in facilitating their future economic, social, and cultural well-being, and therefore strove to acquire the mainstream Academic Discourse of the college. Nevertheless, while the mainstream Discourse of the college has the power to cultivate a certain kind of student disposition, the cultural norms and role expectations in the student’s life worlds outside the college, which could be in conflict with the Discourses valued in the college, also exerted power to shape how the student made sense of who he/she was as a student of RHC.

Meanwhile, given the perceived value attached to education and future opportunities, the community college ESL students regarded learning English as an essential adaptation they had to make in their college life or future career. However, students holding different college goals placed different values in the kind of language skills in which they were willing to invest more. While students with an academic goal tended to invest more in acquiring academic written language, seeing it as a way to align with the identity of academic student, students with non-academic goals tended to invest more in spoken language, seeing vocalization in the classroom as an alternative to manifest themselves as desirable students. Although the students showed their compliance to Academic Discourse through acquiring the valued written language variety or being participatory in classroom talk, they also attempted to accommodate the social norms and cultural practices of their first language and aligned with their cultural identity while they learned

ESL in the classroom. Such norms and practices, however, were kept from the teacher's gaze as much as possible, indicating students' sense that they were unacceptable in this academic context. As such, and as indicated at the outset of this chapter, the RHC ESL students were complex social beings whose student identity intersected with the multiple identities in their life worlds outside the college. They were human agents who did not passively assimilate into the values and social positions imposed by the social institutions of the dominant groups in the host society. In the next chapter, I will illuminate how the focal ESL students, as human agents negotiating with the Academic Discourse that Ms. Jones attempted to socialize them into, had more opportunities to make meaning of their participation in the school-based online language learning and enacted their multiple social identities in the class online forums.

Chapter 6

Students' Identity Online

According to Gee and the poststructuralist view of identity, one's identities are multiple, contextually situated, and constructed in the negotiation process of recognizing and being recognized within particular Discourses. Gee (1996) also suggests that one's identity is enacted through a three-way simultaneous interaction among a) our social or cultural group memberships, b) a particular social language or mixture of them, c) a particular context (p.69). In this chapter, I first will illuminate how technology was used in the case study classroom to socialize the ESL students into the Academic Discourse valued at RHC, focusing on Ms. Jones' academic expectations for the students. I then argue that, situated in the context of Academic Discourse, the identities that the students enacted in the online forums of the WebBoard were explicitly multi-voiced, mixing their academic identities as students and peers in the classroom community with the sociocultural identities they played in their life world outside the college. Furthermore, the students aligned with Academic Discourse, reflecting their identities as expected by the instructor and also actively shaped Academic Discourse by enacting their peer and their life world identities in ways that countered the communicative norms valued by the instructor. This interactional dynamic turned the WebBoard into a space where the students' life world identities co-existed with their student and peer identities, and were recognized and affirmed in the interaction with peers online, showing the potential to broaden the students' L2 learning. The conversations with peers, largely unshaped by the Ms. Jones, allowed the students to pursue their own conversational strategies, ideas, and

viewpoints.

Ms. Jones' perception of the WebBoard

As literature on educational uses of technology in the classroom has suggested (e.g., Reilly, 1992; Sandholtz, Ringstaff & Dwyer, 1997; Warschauer, 1999) the existing cultures of classroom and institution shape how technology is used in the classroom and how teachers and students make meaning of their engagement with technology. For example, one of the three cases presented in Warschauer's (1999) ethnographic study of implementing networked computers in L2 writing classrooms shows that, situated in a Christian institution related to a conservative evangelical Christian church, the teacher, a devoted Christian, extended the institutional culture and her personal belief in order and discipline into her use of technology in her L2 writing class. Thus, she had the students take online quizzes that they had to complete during the first five minutes of class to help ensure that they were not late. She had her students use the World Wide Web, not to search for information, but to take more grammar quizzes. She required the students to use computer mediated communication in the classroom to exchange their writing, not for the purpose of sharing idea with peers, but to check each other's correct inclusion of topic sentences.

In a similar vein, Ms. Jones' use of the WebBoard reflected the Academic Discourse valued at RHC as well as the particular words and deeds that she assumed reflected a good academic student in U.S. college classrooms. In the very first assignment forum, Ms. Jones posted the following text as a prompt to initiate interaction in the class online forum:

Subject: Assignment 1

Hello Everyone!

Welcome to the WebBoard. This will be our journal for the semester. From time to time I will post a new topic on the WebBoard and give you one week to reply. I will then grade that assignment based on content and grammar.

Your first assignment is to introduce yourself to you classmates and then write a short paragraph about an exciting experience that you have had. It could be a time when you won something, went somewhere or did something. Be sure to tell the reader when it happened and why it was exciting.

Your paragraph needs to be about 15-20 sentences long. After you have posted your assignment, you are then to go back later and read what another student has written and reply to it with a short response.

This assignment is due 12:00 on March 12th.

In the classroom, Ms. Jones read this initial message to the students and also tried to communicate her expectations for the class online forums to the students. She said to the class:

Ms. Jones: When you log in, you will see it says assignment 1. So, your first assignment it says “Welcome to the WebBoard. This will be our journal.” In the past, maybe you have a journal in a blue book or something. This will be our journal. From time to time, I will post a new topic on the WebBoard and give you one week to reply. So, you have a week to do this. I will grade the assignment based on content and grammar. So, you’re writing like a little paragraph. So, topic sentence, support, ok? So, it’s not a chat room, Ok? So I don’t want you writing like “I’m” or anything like that. This is not chat, this is an academic practice. But what’s happening is you’re going to get an opportunity to respond to each other’s

writing, whereas when you write on a piece of paper and you give it to me, the only one who could write back to you is ME. But you write here, your classmates are going to read what you have written and they're going to respond, Ok? So, your first assignment is to introduce yourself to your classmates and then write a short paragraph about an exciting experience that you have had. So, we're going to read about horse racing. Horse racing is exciting, ok? The story is exciting, so I want you to tell me an exciting experience you had. Something you did that was exciting. It could be a time when you won something, at somewhere or did something, any kind of excitement. Be sure to tell the reader when it happened and why it was exciting. Your paragraph needs to be 15 sentences, 15 to 20 sentences long. After you have posted your assignment, you are then to go back later and then read what another student had written and then reply with a short response, a short, thoughtful response, Ok? The assignment is due at 12:00 on March 12th. Now this does post time and date, so I know when it is posted, Ok? So, if it's after 12:00 on March 12th, then it's late. Now, what you're going to do is you are going to always, always, ALWAYS, use that button down there "reply". You're NEVER post a new topic, Ok? That's ME! I get to post a new topic. You're gonna reply, in the beginning, you're replying to me. So the first time when you're answering the question, you're introducing yourself.

Terry: So, it's like chatting, right?

Jones: NO, NO, NO, NO. It's not gonna look like chatting. Because chatting would be like "hi, Terry, how are you today."

Terry: So, right now, just reply it, right?

Jones: correct, just reply it.

As indicated in her classroom talk, although Ms. Jones perceived the class online forums as “our journal,” she defined the genre of journal as “assignment,” as she referred to it so throughout her talk, and “an academic practice,” in which the students would be graded on what they wrote as well as the accuracy of their written structures (e.g., “I will grade the assignment based on content and grammar”; “This is not chat, this is an academic practice.”), rather than a conventional journal that documents the writer’s personal reflection or emotional engagement. Moreover, associating the topic under discussion in the online forum with an academic topic read/discussed in the class, Ms. Jones implicitly delivered the message that the class online forum was meant to engage the students in academic talk rather than casual conversation (e.g., “So, we’re going to read about horse racing. Horse racing is exciting, ok? The story is exciting, so I want you to tell me an exciting experience you had.”) Third, by stressing the due date of the assignment, Ms. Jones manifested her expectation of students’ completing assignments on time, showing themselves as responsible learners (e.g., “The assignment is due at 12:00 on March 12th. Now this does post time and date, so I know when it is posted, Ok? So, if it’s after 12:00 on March 12th, then it’s late.”). Finally, in the online forums, the students were expected to use the distinctive academic language promoted in the classroom, such as writing like “a little paragraph” that contains topic and supporting sentences, and to avoid informal language use such as contractions or casual chat room language (e.g. “So, you’re writing like a little paragraph. So, topic sentence, support, ok?” “So, it’s not a chat room, Ok? So

I don't want you writing like "I'm" or anything like that. This is not chat." "It's not gonna look like chatting.") These structural restrictions attempted to shape the students' discourse in the online forums as relatively formal and academic, consistent with the academic language that Ms. Jones attempted to socialize the students into in the classroom.

Ms. Jones' attempt to socialize the students into Academic Discourse through engaging them in the WebBoard was further illustrated in the initial messages that were posted at the beginning of each assignment forum to serve as a prompt for the students' responses in the forums. The following are two of the five initial messages that Ms. Jones posted on the WebBoard, in addition to another one showed above:

Subject: Assignment 3

For this assignment, read the essay on pages 86-87 in your *Destinations* book. It is on Stress and Stress Management. Then write a paragraph to explain what you do when you are in stressful situations. How do you handle your stress?

Write a paragraph with 15-18 sentences that answers the question above. Be sure to include two sentences that have adverb clauses or phrases.

Reply to one classmate with a thoughtful comment.

Due at 12:00 noon on April 28.

Subject: Assignment 5

For your last WebBoard assignment, I want you to look at the list of environmental concerns that we created in class. Which of these concerns you the most? Why? What can *you* do about these concerns? (I don't want government solutions - I want specific things that you can do.)

Write a paragraph 12-15 sentences long that explains your thoughts on this topic. In your answer use the language from page 190 in the *Tapestry* book to express your concerns and plans. Include one conditional sentence in your response.

Reply with a thoughtful comment to a classmate.
Assignment due at noon on June 6th.

Reading these prompts, one notes that Ms. Jones attempted to duplicate the Academic Discourse model valued in the classroom in the class online forums. For example, in the prompt of Assignment 5, by asking the students to “look at the list of environmental concerns that we created in class,” Ms. Jones implicitly told the students that the topic under discussion in the forum was to be an extension to the academic discussion carried out in the class, rather than a casual or spontaneous conversation as is more usual in such electronic communication. Furthermore, by asking questions in a specific sequence -- “Which of these concerns you the most? Why? What can you do about these concerns?” -- Ms. Jones implicitly privileged thinking and writing in the logical cause-effect model valued in the U.S. academy. Finally, since the class was learning to show reasons, results, or conditions in academic essays, by asking the students to include complex sentence structures (i.e., “Include one conditional sentence in your response”) and use the textbook language (i.e., “use the language from page 190 in the *Tapestry* book”) in their written texts online, Ms. Jones was implicitly shaping students’ academic thinking through their academic writing.

From Ms. Jones’ perspective, the assignment forums were designed to correspond with the course goal of developing the students’ academic writing by providing the students with more opportunities to practice academic language and engage in academic thinking.

Therefore, the topics under discussion were thematically related to a textbook topic and meant to engage the students with the kind of logical thinking models valued in academic settings. The language that the students were encouraged to use in the online forums was formal in vocabulary as well as syntactic structures to reinforce the kind of written language use valued in academic writing.

Ms. Jones' use of technology, moreover, reflected not only the Academic Discourse underwritten by the institution, but also a cultural belief pervasive to many classroom teachers in America that classroom dialogue deepens learning (Tateishi, 2007-2008). Guided by such cultural belief, Ms. Jones perceived the WebBoard as a venue to engage the students in dialogue with each other as she said to the class in the above excerpt of classroom discourse: "What's happening is you're going to get an opportunity to respond to each other's writing, whereas when you write on a piece of paper and you give it to me, the only one who could write back to you is ME. But you write here, your classmates are going to read what you have written and they're going to respond, Ok?" and required the students to "Reply with a thoughtful comment to a classmate" in her prompts for the online forums. In the interview, when asked about the goals that she expected to achieve through these online forums, Ms. Jones said,

The assignment section gives them an opportunity to post their ideas and respond to their classmates; this gives them an audience to their writing.

Whereas they are only writing in class on paper and give it to the teacher, the teacher is the only audience; this way they are writing to the

classmates. ... This is an opportunity for them to practice the concept of the audience, because everybody can read it and it also gives them an opportunity to practice. So one of the things that I try to teach the students is that their audiences. When they're writing their essays, it's each other, and that's what they should be aiming at, they shouldn't be aiming at trying to please Ms. Jones, it should be you're writing for your classmates. So the WebBoard gives them the sense of audiences, and the fact that people are reading their writing. ... Because I think students can learn from each other. And I think [the WebBoard] gives some opportunities to see examples of writing and they have a purpose for their writing, this gives a purpose to what they are doing. ... Also I had noticed in the past that students were replying back and forth to each other. So they would reply to what the person wrote and then they might ask a question and that person would reply back to them and then they started this dialogue, which is great and I want to encourage the dialogue.

This belief appeared also when she communicated her expectations to the students in the classroom, implicating the students' enactment of an academically focused peer identity:

Ms. Jones: And when you reply to another student, so let's say Terry wrote something and she said she had an exciting trip to Japan, ok? She tells you that was exciting. And I think Yeah, I went to Japan, too. And I had a good time and it was exciting. So, I am gonna reply to Terry. So you're gonna to

do reply two times. One time, first time, to me, second time to at least one student. You can reply to more than one student. So you can dialogue back and forth by replying. Now, I am looking for what I call a thoughtful response. So, if I just go like, “Wow! Kevin, sounds great!” Hun, there’s no thinking in my response there, right? Your response doesn’t have to be a paragraph long, but it has to show that you’re looking at what they wrote and you’re responding to what they wrote. Not simply, “Yeah! Cool!” Now because this is academic writing, and not a chat room, I don’t want to see “I” written like that [Ms. Jones wrote “i” on the board] or “You” written like that [Ms. Jones wrote “u” on the board], ok? It’s not a chat room.

Ms. Jones’ talk in the classroom showed that while she encouraged the students to engage with their peers in dialogue and write with the audience of peers in mind, she also expected them to interact with each other and enact their peer identity in a particular school-like way. That is, she encouraged the students to engage each other in serious academic conversation by writing “a thoughtful response” rather than friendly casual exchanges (e.g. “If I just go like, ‘Wow! Kevin, sounds great!’ . Hun, there’s no thinking in my response there, right?” “It has to show that you’re looking at what they wrote and you’re responding to what they wrote. Not simply, ‘Yeah! Cool!’”), and avoiding informal language (e.g., “Now because this is academic writing, and not a chat room, I don’t want to see ‘I’ written like that [Ms. Jones wrote “i” on the board] or ‘You’ written like that [Ms. Jones wrote “u”

on the board], ok?”)

When I probed her in the interview on the notion of “thoughtful response,” Ms. Jones said that in addition to responding to what their peers wrote about as she said in the classroom (i.e., “After you have posted your assignment, you are then to go back later and then read what another student had written and then reply with a short response, a short, thoughtful response, Ok?”), she also expected the students to note their peers’ written structures when the students interacted with each other. She said in the interview,

The students, they all know who the A students are in class. ... They know who are the better students, and so they can look at.. if they do this, I don’t know, some of them have, and in the past I had students come in, you know, said “Oh, that was really well written” to another student. But they don’t do that often, it could be something that I could be more directive about. ...I do want them to look for things like “do you have topic sentence?” “are you supporting it with specific examples?” To make them more focus on the writing and the organization of the writing, because those are the things that seem to be a little bit of the weakness still as we come to this semester with the writing.

Hence, in conversation with Academic Discourse valued at the college and the American cultural belief that students learn through verbal interaction, the kind of identity with their peers that Ms. Jones encouraged the students to take on in the online forums was primarily academic in nature. She expected the students to

interact with each other in formal academic language, and engage with each other in serious academic discussion, even though WebBoard was a medium that otherwise would have invited more casual conversation.

The Students' Identity Enactment in the WebBoard

As mentioned earlier, a sociocultural perspective on language and language learning does not perceive language as neutral or context-independent. In other words, there is no such thing as language (e.g., English) “in general.” Rather, people use a specific *social language* (e.g., variety or register of English) to fit certain social purposes. Moreover, people learn not only one social language, but many different social languages in their primary and secondary socialization. As Gee (1996) states, “None of us speaks a single, uniform language, nor is any one of us a single, uniform identity. The different social languages we use allow us to render multiple whos (we are) and whats (we are doing) socially visible.” (p.68) That is, when people speak or write, they often mix together different social languages—a practice Bakhtin (1981) called *heteroglossia*. Being speakers or writers of several social languages, we design our oral or written utterances in a heteroglossic mixture, making our multiple identities visible and recognized in a given time and space.

In this section, drawing on the notion of *social language* and *heteroglossia*, I lay out the multiple voices that the students drew on to enact their sociocultural identities through the discursive practices in the class online forums. I argue that, although, in accordance with Academic Discourse, Ms. Jones expected the students to perform their student and peer identities in the online forums in certain ways, the students, as human

agents, did not always act in accordance with the expectations of the instructor. They enacted multiple facets of their identities, representing themselves as students writing to meet the instructor's academic expectations, as compassionate peers who shared personal experiences and common interests, and as social beings responding to the unique sociocultural membership of their life worlds outside college.

Students' enactment of the student identity.

One of the identities that the students enacted on the WebBoard was academic, meeting the academic expectations of Ms. Jones. This identity enactment was reflected in the students' language choices and their sense of audience in the online forums. Although the students' written texts online didn't always manifest them as mature academic writers who mastered the kind of academic writing valued by Ms. Jones, structural and organizational aspects of their language use in the assignment forums of the WebBoard were indeed a concern to them. When talking about the writing process in the assignment forums, students with academic goals, such as Virginia said,

Um-hum~ I start with free writing, what comes to my head, what is in my pocket, and then I make it the way I want to present it, and then I revise it, I check the grammar, I add things, more information, or I check, especially the topic sentence, because sometimes we miss, we forget to put the topic sentence. And after I wrote everything, I then elaborate the main idea of my paragraph and then make sure I include the topic sentence.

Virginia intentionally made sure that her language use in the online forums conveyed a sense of academese. Her choice to use formal academic language reflected her perception

that writing in the online forums is a formal academic act, a way to represent herself as a valuable, academic student to Ms. Jones by choosing to use the kind of language valued by Ms. Jones.

Enacting their student identity through using formal language structures in the assignment forums was also a concern for students with non-academic goals. Speaking of his writing process in the assignment forums, Vincent said,

YC: 你通常都怎麼做這個作業, 你的writing process 是~ (How do you complete the assignment? What is your writing process?)

Vincent: 就是讀完她的那個提示, 我會先在紙上寫一遍。寫一遍以後, 再修改, 就grammar什麼都不要錯。就是我自己修改, 然後修改完 就是打到那個word裡面改一遍, 比如 ▫ 基本上沒什麼大錯, 然後就是要讓句子好看。... 所以就要看有的句子是不是太散啦, 或者是簡單的句子就要合併一下嘛!就是要讓句子比較好看點。(I read her instruction first and then I write on paper. After I write, I will revise, making sure there are no grammatical errors. When I revise, I pay attention to major grammatical errors and then try to make the sentences look good. ... So the revision is to make sure the sentences look tight or combine some simple sentences into complex sentences. Anyway, just to make the sentences look good.)

Vincent's concern about the grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity in his writing process illustrates that, like students with academic goals, he intentionally chose

to meet Ms. Jones' academic language expectations and values. In his attempt to "make the sentences look good," Vincent tried to make his student identity visible to Ms. Jones, even though he himself did not have high academic goals. Rather, he fit his discourse into the social and cultural expectations of the moment, and these were authorized by the teacher.

Thus, not only did the students' language choice online reflect their student identity, the students explicitly said in their interviews that they perceived writing in the online forums as an academic task directed not to their peers, as Ms. Jones had suggested to them it was, but rather directed to the instructor, as academic tasks and the discourse that goes with them usually are. When asked about their sense of audience in the assignment forums, the students said,

YC: When you are writing on the WebBoard, who do you think you are writing to?

Sarah: Um~ the teacher, because she will evaluate our assignment.

YC: What about your classmates? Have you thought about them since they are going to read your assignment?

Sarah: I don't care about them. I don't care about what their opinion is because Ms. Jones is going to be the one who gives the grade. So I care about her.

In responding to the same question, Virginia said:

Virginia: When I'm writing, I just think about how to do it well, then when I revise it, I think about the teacher is going to check, but before that, I just

think about write as best as I can.

YC: How about your classmates? Do you think about them when you write or after you revise?

Virginia: Hum~ sometimes, sometimes, but not too much, to be honest, not too much.

Mathew also said:

YC: Un-huh. When you write, you have an imagined audience in your mind, right? Who do you think your reader is when you write in the Web Board?

Mathew: Oh, yes. Ms. Jones. Because she got to give me a grade. You know, actually..in Chinese, assignment is for teacher.

The students regarded the instructor, rather than the student peers, as their real audience. In particular, Mathew's instant response to my question of audience (i.e., "Oh, yes. Ms. Jones.") suggests that he knew without doubt that Ms. Jones was the primary audience that he had to target on in the online forums for she was the one grading his work. Thus, while Ms. Jones perceived engaging the students in dialogues with their peers as a way to deepen learning, the students interpreted their participating in the online forums as another academic task that was teacher-driven and aimed to demonstrate to the teacher that they were learning. The peer audience was essentially eclipsed in this conception of performance.

Furthermore, as indicated in the literature on L2 learning (McKay & Wong, 1996, Norton, 2000), L2 students' investments in school-based language learning activities are

selective, and different language skills are imbued with different meaning, depending on the subject position the student wishes to align with. In the previous chapter, my analysis of the focal students' investment in their ESL learning in Ms. Jones' classroom also shows that students with academic goals tended to invest more in acquiring the kind of academic written language promoted by Ms. Jones than students with non-academic goals who tended to downplay the acquisition of such academic skills.

Looking into the students' interview talk and the frequency of their participation in the WebBoard, this study further indicates that the kind of student identity that individual students wished to align with and the value they attached to their participation in the class online forums shaped their investment in this school-based online learning activity.

Perceiving writing on the WebBoard as completing an academic written assignment, students with academic goals (e.g., Charlene, Sarah, and Virginia) appeared to write on the WebBoard with higher frequency than those with non-academic goals (e.g., Mathew and Vincent). The following Table summarizes the number of threads the focal students posted in the assignment forums of the WebBoard, with Matthew and Vincent posting approximately forty percent less than either Charlene, Sarah, or Virginia.

Table 3

Numbers of Threads the Focal Students Posted in the WebBoard

Students	Charlene	Sarah	Mathew	Vincent	Sheena	Virginia
Total Threads	15	16	9	9	10	14

For students with an academic goal, participation in the WebBoard was regarded as

doing academic practice which helped them to sharpen their skills in written English.

When asked about what she thought she learned from participation in the WebBoard, Charlene said,

I can see how other students write. I can know their level. If I think they are not very good, and then at least I know I am not the worst in the class, and I kind of know the standard of 33A. ... And maybe when you look at other classmates' writing, then you can see, maybe you know how to fix the problem, and then when you know they are making mistakes, actually you already got the

knowledge because you know how to fix them. 好像你看到她的錯誤那就覺得你講得出來就證明你已經會這個東西。...還有就是會看到人家不同的idea, 看到人家怎麼想怎麼寫, 然後那有些地方就會覺得耶, 也可以這樣子寫的嘛。然後有時學到新的詞語嘍, 就是人家用, 你不懂, 那你就會查字典。

(It's like when you can discern the mistakes that the other students made, and you can point it out, you kind of know you master this. ... Also I learn different ideas from the other students. When I read how other people think and write about the topic, I started to realize that there's another way to address this topic. Sometimes I learn new vocabulary. That is, when the other students use a word, and I don't understand, then I will look it up in the dictionary.)

When asked what she learned from writing and responding to her student peers in the WebBoard, Virginia said,

Oh, to write and to express better idea. I mean sometimes we want to say

something or write something, and we cannot explain them in English, maybe in our language it's easier, but in English it's hard to explain that, even if we have the right idea, we cannot explain in [written English]. So, it helps me to learn to express my ideas in English.

Sarah responded to the same question as the following:

I think Ms. Jones wants us to practice writing and read other people's assignment in English. I can also learn something that I lack of from my classmates' writing. ... Because some of them, especially Cindy's assignment, because she uses a lot of words that I can't understand, and then I will look up some of the words.

Fitting Ms. Jones' conceptions of the WebBoard, Charlene, Sarah, and Virginia perceived that the online forums helped to enhance their English language skill (e.g., "when you know they are making mistakes, actually you already got the knowledge because you know how to fix them" "it helps me to learn to express my ideas in English" "I think Ms. Jones wants us to practice writing and read other people's assignment in English"), to learn from their peers (e.g., "I learn different ideas from the other students" "Sometimes I learn new vocabulary" "I can also learn something that I lack of from my classmates' writing"). For Charlene, who struggled with the competing discourses of home and school, and was particularly eager to bid for an academic identity, participation in the WebBoard also allowed her to check her academic status in the class (e.g., "If I think they are not very good, and then at least I know I am not the worst in the class, and I kind of know the standard of 33A").

Although attending RHC with an academic goal, Sheena's perception on what she learned from participating in the WebBoard was more restricted to acquiring technical skills, such as learning to type and putting pictures, rather than a sense of learning from peers or enhancing her written language skills. When asked what she thought she learned from participating in the WebBoard, Sheena said,

Sheena: Ah, I learned to type. Because I type very slow and I have to watch the keyboard, I can't watch the monitor while I'm typing. But after practice, I can type faster and maybe in the future, in the UC, some people use their notebook to type notes in the class, so I have to type faster. If I can't, how can I use the notebook to type class notes in the class.

YC: So, besides typing, is there anything you learned from reading or writing on the WebBoard?

Sheena: Oh~ um... yes, because we can put pictures on the web board, but I can't put pictures on my other writing assignment, like the homework I typed at home, I can't put the picture on it. It's strange, I think it's strange. But if I write the assignment in the WebBoard, I can put pictures, I will try to make it beautiful. ...Because I'm not very good at explain what I see in words, so the picture helps me to show why I think this place is beautiful, or explain why I like this.

It appears that, although Sheena mentioned participation in the WebBoard helped her learning to type in English—a literacy skill that she associated with her academic future

(e.g., “maybe in the future, in the UC, some people use their notebook to type notes in the class, so I have to type faster”), she didn’t construe her participation as learning from her peers or see it as an opportunity to push herself producing more written text in English as her other transfer-bound peers did. Perhaps not surprisingly, she was more reserved in her participation in the WebBoard as she produced only enough threads to meet Ms. Jones’ minimal requirements.

For students with non-academic goals, participation in the WebBoard was interpreted as simply an act of completing a course assignment rather than associating it with an academic future or the kind of English they valued. For example, when asked what he thought he learned from participating in the WebBoard, Vincent commented:

YC: 那你覺得你從activity裡面你學到什麼東西, 或是這個assignment裡面學到什麼東西? (What do you think you are learning from the Web Board or the assignment?)

Vincent: 呃 .. 這怎麼講呢, 我不知道, 這個.. 沒有太大的感覺。我覺得這是一個..這是一門作業, 是writing而已啊! 是focus在writing上面的作業。我是這麼想的, 只是做一門作業。 因為什麼呢? 因為她 ▪ 她要grade, 一但grade, 這個東西就等於是, 就是有一個壓力在那裡。如果你沒有grade, 這個可能會更輕鬆一下, 我覺得。 但是你有grade在上面, 那這些東西, 寫的東西就不光只是在單純的聊天啦! 這件事就不是聊天啦! 這就其實是, 比如她要 ▪ 你一定要有grammar啦! 你要什麼, 這就是在push你啦! 所以給你增加壓力。所以這個東西

出來是，我就當它是一個作業啦!(Um ~ what should I say. I don't know. I don't have too much feeling. I think it's an .. This is an assignment, just writing! It is an assignment focusing on writing. I think I am just doing an assignment. Why do I say so? Because she (Ms. Jones) said she would grade us. Once grading got involved, she put pressure on us. If grading didn't get involved, in my opinion, it might be more relaxing. But if you have grading, then what I wrote was not a matter of chatting. The whole event (of writing on the Web Board) was not just chatting. For example, when she wanted us to pay attention to grammar or things like that, she was pushing us and giving pressure. So, I just regarded it as an assignment.)

One can notice that Vincent hesitated as he began to comment on his learning experience in the online forums (i.e., “Um ~ what should I say. I don't know. I don't have too much feeling. I think it's an..”). His hedge seems to reflect his doubt about what he could gain from participating in the WebBoard. He also revealed his attitude toward the online forums by commenting that writing in the online forum was “an assignment, just writing!” and his participation in it was “just doing an assignment.” He blamed Ms. Jones for dismissing the conventional notion of “chatting” in the online forums for she graded their work online and stressed “grammar or things like that” in their online language use. He was not willing to buy into a discourse that turned a chat-like forum into an academic one.

Mathew shared Vincent's perspectives.

YC: So, how do you feel when you post your assignment in the WebBoard and have your classmates read it?

Mathew: Uh, nothing. I never think about it. Just to finish an assignment.

The purpose is just to finish the assignment.

Unlike Charlene, Sarah, Sheena, and Virginia, who valued their participation in the online forums as an act of shaping an Academic Discourse and by implication an academic identity, Vincent and Mathew downplayed the importance of cultivating such a Discourse or identity. They regarded participation in the assignment forum as “nothing” but to “finish an assignment,” and therefore invest just enough to meet the course requirement, doing only what they were asked to. It is not surprising that, among the focal students, they posted the fewest number of threads.

Students' enactment of peer identity.

Despite enacting their student identity in the online forums by stressing the use of formal language and perceiving the instructor as the primary audience of their online texts, the students also managed to enact their roles as peers outside of an Academic Discourse, particularly when they responded to their peers' initial written text addressing Ms. Jones' prompt. Doing so, the students tended to interact with each other for social purpose rather than academic purposes. Their online textual exchanges focused more on building solidarity and common ground than debating the validity of their viewpoints or evaluating the written structures in their peers' texts.

When asked how they decided who to respond to in the assignment forums, the students indicated that common interests or shared experiences presented in the content

of their peers' texts was the major impetus that drew them to respond. Talking about why she chose to reply to Cindy's written text in the first assignment, Charlene said,

像上次那個我reply Cindy 的，因為她講Rose Bowl, Rose Parade, 那我
知道有這個東西啊，那我一直想去看，我來這邊那麼久都一直沒有去看過，然
後她 ▫ 她女兒拿到那個prize 嘛，我就不敢想像 ▫ 好像有認識的人這樣子，
因為 ▫ 次看那些什麼比賽就好像那些人不能relate 到你，然後你現在就是居
然這裡面有認識的winner 這樣，不一樣的。然後像有些人他們 ▫ 什麼西湖
啊，什麼中國那些地方，那我根本就不知道那些地方，我沒去過，所以我
不能reply 那些。(For example, in the first assignment, I replied to Cindy's message,
because she talked about Rose Bowl and Rose Parade, and I know about these. I
have been here for a long time and have always wanted to go to Rose Parade, but
haven't got a chance to. Also she said her daughter got the prize. I can't believe
someone I know won a prize in the tournament of Rose Princess. I can't believe I
know one of the winners. It feels so different. Many people talked about Xi Lake
or places in China, but I have no idea about those places, I have never been there,
so I can't reply to those.)

In replying to my question, "How do you decide whose essay to reply to?" Sarah said,

Um.. it depends on if it is comfortable for me to read their essay, maybe
like we have the same topic, like similarities, and then I can talk about it
more, I can reply more. If he or she said something I'm not familiar with, I
will not reply. ...

YC: Have you thought about responding to your classmate by saying things like “hey, Sheena you write really well, your topic sentence is clear to me” or commenting on their grammatical errors or essay structures?

Sarah: No, I don't. To me, it's just the content of the paragraph. I am afraid maybe my opinion of it is wrong, because my English is not so well, I might tell her the wrong thing.

Vincent also said,

YC: 你通常都怎樣決定你要reply誰? (How do you decide which message to reply to?)

Vincent: 我是看我喜歡，就看他寫的 ▫ 容，這和語法什麼任何都無關由，我就覺得他的 ▫ 容我比較喜歡，比較有趣的，我就會看，會想回。(I read what attracts me. It depends on the content of one's writing, and has nothing to do with his language structures or usages. I will read or respond to messages that were appealing to me; that is the content that was interesting to me.)

It appeared that what drew the students' attention in the online forums was indications of common ground with other students based on shared experiences or common interests, the kind of appeal that any situation might spark, not only academic ones. The students' interpretation of their peer identity was reflected not only in what they chose to respond to, but also in how they chose to write in the responses. For example, in responding to Anne's first assignment forum, an online text that described her trip to Xi Lake in China as an unforgettable experience, Sarah wrote to her peer:

Hello, Ann, I am Sarah. I am very glad to see your experience. I have been to West Lake (you called it Xi Lake, it is the same) for several times, because I have been stayed in Hangzhou for one year. That is a very famous resort in China and it is really beautiful. I don't know how about the weather when you went there. The best time to visit West Lake is rainy day, and you can walk along the bank of river, that is really nice!

One can notice that, in this exchange, Sarah used positive politeness strategies (Brown & Livinson, 1978/1999) to agree with and collaborate with her peers' points. She attended to her peers' interest by complementing and exaggerating Ann's experience in West Lake (e.g., "I am very glad to see your experience" and "That is a very famous resort in China and it is really beautiful"). She asserted common ground with her peer by including both of them in the activity (e.g., "I have been to West Lake (you called it Xi Lake, it is the same) for several times.") She further elaborated on Ann's idea by offering a suggestion ("The best time to visit West Lake is rainy day, and you can walk along the bank of river, that is really nice!"). Sarah projected herself as a compassionate peer who attended to and shared a common interest with Anne.

In another thread that Sarah wrote, in response to Vincent's written texts in Assignment 5 where he wrote about using recycled paper as a way to solve environmental pollution, Sarah wrote:

Hello, Vincent. I agree with you about saving paper. Nowadays, many people like to type instead of writing on the paper, but the printers still need a lot of paper. Therefore, reusing the paper is very important. I have a

towel to dry my hand if my hand is wet and I think it is also a way to save paper resource. Because of the popularity of the Internet, we do not need to buy the newspaper, and we can read the news from the website, which is another useful way to save the paper.

In this excerpt, Sarah started with an agreement with Vincent's viewpoint (e.g., "I agree with you about saving paper.") She confirmed Vincent's idea by emphasizing the importance of reusing paper (e.g., "reusing the paper is very important.") and elaborated his viewpoint by offering alternative practices to save paper. To assert her concern for Vincent's want, she depicted herself as someone who cares about saving paper as Vincent did (e.g., "I have a towel to dry my hand."). Finally, she used in-group identity markers (e.g., "we do not need to buy the newspaper, and we can read the news from the website, which is another useful way to save the paper.") to include both of them into the same practice of saving paper. Sarah's consistent use of positive politeness strategies illustrates that when addressing her peers, being friendly, confirming, and agreeing were common interactional norms in the online forums of the WebBoard.

In effect, as I examined all of the seven threads that Sarah wrote in response to her peers in the assignment forums, they all show a similar pattern in agreeing with and collaborating with the interests of her student peers, except the following one where a slight sense of disagreement was shown. In responding to Virginia's online text in Assignment 3, in which she wrote about doing activities that she really enjoyed such as listening to music, walking her dog, and talking with close friends, as her way of managing stress, Sarah wrote the following text:

Hello, Virginia, this is Sarah. I agree with you that listening to the music is a good way to forget the worries, but I think you can only forget the worries when you are listening to the music, so I am still trying to find another way to relax myself. Like what you said, talking with friends and share your thoughts is a good way to find the root of your stress and friends can give you some suggestions.

This is a good way to release yourself.

One can notice that although Sarah showed a mild sense of disagreement with Virginia's idea (e.g., "but I think you can only forget the worries when you are listening to the music, so I am still trying to find another way to relax myself."), her disagreement was softened by partially agreeing with Virginia's idea (e.g., "I agree with you that listening to the music is a good way to forget the worries ") and mitigated by corroborating the other idea that Virginia had proposed ("Like what you said, talking with friends and share your thoughts is a good way "). Thus, although the students occasionally showed disagreement when they interacted with each other in the online forums, their disagreement was modified rather than boldly confrontational.

The tendency to confirm and agree with peers' ideas in the class online forums was also found in the textual exchanges of male students who were reported to be more aggressive and argumentative in their verbal behaviors than females and tend to use more bald disagreements (Holmes, 1995/1999). As I examined the four threads of responses to peers that Vincent posted in the assignment forums, all of them showed a similar pattern of confirming and elaborating on his peers' ideas. For example, in the following thread, Vincent responded to Sheena's written texts in Assignment 5, in which she showed her

concern about climate change caused by the green house effect, and referred to decreasing the time of using air conditioners and taking mass transit as ways to alleviate global warming.

Hi Sheena, this is Vincent. I am also concerned about global warming and greenhouse effect. In California the summer is very hot, but I don't always turn on the air conditioner. Sometimes I open all my windows or use a fan. I also try to go downstairs because it is cooler downstairs. I know someone who always turn on the air conditioner and heater. He wears shorts in winter and say it's cold, so he turn on heater. This waste so much energy. I also agree with your comment on taking mass transit. This saves a lot of energy. I try to carpool with my friends when I go somewhere. I think we all need to do something small to save more energy.

In this excerpt, Vincent attended to Sheena's concern ("I am also concerned about global warming and greenhouse effect") and agreed with Sheena's viewpoint ("I also agree with your comment on taking mass transit"). He also sought to build solidarity and common ground with Sheena by showing how he tried to alleviate global warming by carpooling with friends and reducing the time of using the air conditioner -- rather than being competitive, aggressive, and argumentative as some have found in male interaction.

In a similar vein, Mathew's textual exchanges also showed a pattern of confirming and agreeing with peers, rather than being disagreeing or competitive. The following is Mathew's response to Vincent's written texts in Assignment 5 about recycling paper:

Hi, Vincent, this is Mathew. After I read your paragraph, I do

strongly agree with your view of points. In our daily life, we can buy thousands of paper by several of dollars. Therefore, people usually ignore to save paper because of the low price and they might not realize that paper was made by wood. The way you wanted to save paper is very helpful. I agree with you about using recycle paper to reduce the costing of forest, and I think that if people knew the importance of saving paper, they will work hard to solve the problem. For example, people might use computer in instead of paper. When people want to solve of this problem, they will make a better life.

In the above textual exchange, using positive politeness strategies, Mathew established solidarity and a common ground with his male student peer (i.e., “I do strongly agree with your view of points”; “The way you wanted to save paper is very helpful”; “I agree with you about using recycle paper to reduce the costing of forest”). He also elaborated on Vincent’s idea of using recycled paper to save the environment by offering alternative choices (“people might use computer in instead of paper.”).

In fact, when I examined all of the four threads that Mathew wrote to respond to his peers, all but one of them showed the pattern of overt agreeing and confirming. The exception was the following, when Mathew responded to one of his male peers, Larry, who wrote in Assignment 3 about fighting, boxing and destroying house decorations as his ways of managing stress.

Hi, Larry, this is Mathew. Thank you to share your experience. The way that you use to reduce your stress seems to be unique but useful. There is a thing that I want to remind you that is violence will not work well every time, it will cause some serious problem when you use violence to reduce your stress. It is so easily to make people lose control of their mentally consciousness, then you may make some grisliness aftermath. Think about it, I think you might want to change another mild way to reduce you stress.

One can notice that using positive polite strategies, Mathew tried to mitigate his disagreement with Larry's opinion by acknowledging his contribution (e.g., "Thank you to share your experience") and confirming his idea (e.g., "The way that you use to reduce your stress seems to be unique but useful"). Rather than baldly disagree with or challenge Larry's opinion, Mathew modified his disagreement in the form of suggestion and advice ("There is a thing that I want to remind you that is violence will not work well every time"; "Think about it, I think you might want to change another mild way to reduce you stress"). Vincent and Mathew's use of positive politeness strategies in responding to their student peers shows their attempt to maintain solidarity and share common interests with their peers in the online forums. Their transgression of normative gender behavior suggests that being cooperative and confirming was a highly valued communicative norm among peers in the online forums.

The above analysis of the students' interaction with peers suggests that the communicative norms created by the students in the online forum in different ways overturned Ms. Jones' expectations for their interactions. When the students interacted

with each other online, it was what they wrote about, rather than how well they wrote, that came to the center of the students' attention. It was the norm of cooperation and confirming that seemed more highly valued than the norm of being argumentative or evaluative as is often seen in conventional academic genres. The students used written exchanges with peers as social acts that emphasized relationship and friendship. Hence, while Ms. Jones focused on shaping for the students a certain kind of academic peer role that was comprised of serious academic exchange, as human agents enacting their own peer needs and ways, the students modified the teacher's expectations to accommodate their own. Doing so, they shaped a peer language repertoire comprised of politeness and other strategies appropriate to the interactive situation that they perceived themselves to be in.

Students' enactment of life world identity.

As indicated in the previous chapter, ESL students are complex social beings whose student identity intertwined with the discourses in their life world outside college. In the online forums, the students were found to write in multiple voices, using multiple social languages to enact their multiple identities (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 1996, 2002). That is, while enacting their identities in the classroom community as student and peer, the students, referring to the sociocultural membership that they were affiliated in their life worlds outside college, also simultaneously enacted their life world identities as they responded to the academic topics raised in Ms. Jones' initial prompt. For example, in response to Ms. Jones' initial message in Assignment 3 that ask the students to "write a paragraph to explain what you do when you are in stressful situations. How do you

handle your stress? “ Sarah wrote:

As the improvement of people's standard of life, people have lots of entertainments to relax themselves, but stress still can't be avoided. For me, as a student, I have stress from study. When I was in high school, I was really stressful, because I had to prepare for the college entrance exam. I had never had so much stress before. I thought I couldn't continue to study if I didn't find a way to relieve stress. Fortunately, my teacher told me that I could write journals if I was upset. I wrote journals everyday and I found I felt much better. I looked journals as my "closest friend" and wrote whatever I wanted. Writing journals is a good way for me to relieve my stress and listening to the music is another good way for me to relax myself. Some people use drinking to relax themselves in order to keep away from their annoyances. As for me, I use music to help me keep away from the upset things. I like to listen to music and lie on the bed, then I turn the volume up so that I can't hear any other voice except the music. This atmosphere makes me feel comfortable and helps me to get into the world of music. The light music is a good one for me because I can relax my mind totally and sometimes I will fall asleep when I listen to the music. After I get up, I will eat food that I like. The reason why I eat food is that when I am eating, I feel very happy and content. The stress can be gained as we getting older, so I should find some better ways to relieve my stress. Handling stress is important but not difficult if you can find the way to

relieve yourself.

In her response, Sarah simultaneously adopted three different voices and therefore three different identities in her written text. Firstly, she enacted her student identity, writing to meet the academic expectation of Ms. Jones. Her student identity was marked by third-person sentence subject (i.e., “*people* have lots of entertainments to relax themselves “) and written language features (Chafe, 1982), such as sequences of prepositional phrases (e.g., “*the improvement of people's standard of life*”), participles (e.g., “*Handling stress* is important”), and complement clauses (e.g., “some people use drinking to relax themselves *in order to keep away from their annoyances*”). Using these linguistic devices, Sarah was able to integrate more information in each idea unit to produce formal-like texts and mimic the detached voice frequently seen in the academic genre. Such linguistic behavior showed Sarah’s attempt to align with her student identity by writing to meet the formal written language valued by the instructor.

In addition to the student identity, Sarah also enacted her peer identity. Her peer identity was marked by oral language features (Chafe, 1982), such as using first-person reference (e.g., “When *I* was in high school, *I* was really stressful, because *I* had to prepare for the college entrance exam.), emphatic particles (e.g., “I had never had *so* much stress before”), showing mental process (e.g., “*I thought* I couldn't continue to study) and colloquial usage (e.g., “I looked journals as my ‘*closest friend*’”; “*really stressful*”). Using these linguistic features, Sarah conveyed a sense of involvement and forged an intimate, personal relationship, essentially geared toward her peers.

Finally, Sarah also enacted her life world identity as she wrote about her stress and

solutions. By referring to her prior educational experience in China (e.g., "When I was in high school, I was really stressful, because I had to prepare for the college entrance exam."), and youth culture (e.g., "I like to listen to music and lie on the bed, then I turn the volume up so that I can't hear any other voice except the music.") Sarah made her social identity as Chinese immigrant teenager visible to the class. Sarah's enactment of her life world identity as Chinese teenager was recognized and affirmed by her peer, Rachel, who drew on their shared life experiences outside the classroom to respond to Sarah's initial written text.

Hi, Sarah. I'm Rachel. We had same experience about the college entrance exam, and I think that is the big stress for a lot of students in China. I remember the teacher said this is your only chance to get into a good college and it is the only way you can better your future. We all knew that meaning, it seemed a last warning before you took the exam.

Through the textual exchanges, Sarah and Rachel not only displayed their social identity as Chinese immigrant teenagers to the class, but also forged an affinity group bound with their shared social identity outside the college by speaking of the college entrance exam as an experience that is only known to and shared by the Chinese students in the class (e.g., "I think that is the big stress for a lot of students in China. ... We all knew that meaning").

Sarah's written exchanges in the class online forums illustrate that in addition to complying with Ms. Jones' expectation, enacting their academic identities as student and

peers, the WebBoard was also a social venue where the students got a chance to get their life worlds exposed to and affirmed by the class, and build up non-academic relationships with their student peers. As Sarah said in the interview,

YC: Is there anything that you think is important about your learning or writing experience on the WebBoard that I haven't asked you about?

Sarah: Um~ .. maybe through .. after I write in the WebBoard, I feel maybe the relationship between our classmates become closer. ... Like the first assignment is about our exciting experience, and we can share with each other our exciting experience. Some of them are very funny. So besides learning from [my classmates'] use of vocabulary, I also learn more about their life, their personal life by reading their assignments.

Like Sarah, Vincent was also found to use multiple social languages and enact multiple identities in his written texts online. For example, in responding to Ms. Jones' prompt in Assignment 5 that asked the students to write about an environmental issue of their concern, Vincent posted the following text:

The world we live in faces many environmental issues. What most concerns me is losing our forest and the idea of recycling. Our trees are being cut down very fast, and not many people recycle papers. Trees give us cleaner air and protect us from landslide. In addition, they provide food resources for wild life and a place for them to live in. When we have less trees, we have less animals. I cannot stop people cutting down trees, but I can recycle paper to use less wood and trees. If a

paper is reusable, then reuse the paper. I always save wrong printed paper and use them as note papers. Also, I always buy recycled paper at office supply stores for my printer. I am a designer so I use a lot of papers. I use recycled paper for my sketches and drafts, and I only use good paper for my final projects. I also use both sides of the paper. When I buy paper towels I buy Bounty because their paper is smaller. I don't need to use a big sheet to clean something. When I use towels to dry my hands, I save them to clean the tables later. What I plan to do is encourage people to do the same. Recycling paper feels like a small step, but I think it is very important. If we all do the same, then our planet could be a lot better to live in.

First, Vincent made effort to appropriate a student identity by imbuing a sense of academese into his written texts. For example, he used abstract sentence subjects (i.e., “*What most concerns me* is losing our forest and the idea of recycling “), and written language features, such as attributive adjectives (e.g., “I use *recycled paper*”), sequences of prepositional phrases (e.g., “I always buy recycled paper *at office supply stores for my printer*”), conjoined phrases (e.g., “Trees *give us cleaner air and protect us from landslide*”), participles (e.g., “*recycling paper* feels like a small step”), complement clauses (e.g., “The world *we live in* faces many environmental issues”), and passive voices (e.g., “Our trees *are being cut down* very fast). Furthermore, Vincent also reflected his peer identity by conveying a sense of involvement and intimacy, using first-person reference *I*, *we*, and *us* throughout the text, and other oral language features, such as emphatic particles (e.g., “our planet could be *a lot better* to live in “), and fuzziness

(e.g., I don't need to use a big sheet to clean *something*"). Finally, Vincent made his artist identity visible. As shown in his text above, speaking from the stance of a designer (e.g., "I am a designer"), Vincent reported his practice of using recycled paper for "sketches" "drafts" and "final projects" as ways to conserve resources. His life world identity was not only recognized by the classroom participants as I observed him constantly referred as "the artist" by the class, but also corroborated and affirmed as his peers responded to and made comments on his online text. As shown in my earlier analysis of the students' enactment of peer identity online, when student peers, such as Sarah and Mathew, responded to Vincent's written text on Assignment 5, they agreed with Vincent's ideas and collaborated with him to reinforce the practice of conserving paper resources. As Vincent's peers confirmed and agreed with his ideas and practices, they not only built solidarity or forged friendship, but also implicitly affirmed Vincent's life world identity as an artist.

In a similar vein, Mathew's online texts reflected multiple identities. For example, in responding to Ms. Jones' prompt in Assignment 3, Mathew posted the following:

Every stress in every different sides show dissimilar significations, and different people will have their particular attitude with same stress. There also are many different way to solve their different stress. Unlike in the movie, roles usually went crazy when they got stressed; people who got really serious stress in real life generally will do some mild action to release their lose control of emotions. I am a Christian, so I always pray whenever I felt something which seemed to be fearful and stressful. No matter your religion is built on mentally or physically, praying is

the best way to reduce the stress for Christian. Before I became a Christian, I play saxophone when I felt really stressed. When I play saxophone, there will be only two things, saxophone and rhythm, in the world and there will not be more thinking about my real life. Another way that I used to melt my life stress before I became a Christian is by playing video games. I mostly asked my friends to play with me, then I could talk with them when I felt uncomfortable. Talking and playing video game is a good way to melt the stress. On the other hand, every time when I felt stressful, I would like to go out by myself. Sitting under umbrage, smelling fresh air, and touching the nature in a quiet environment could make every muscle that in my body relax. While I was feeling the mysterious nature, I can listen to light music, and take a deep breath before enjoying the pure colorful world. Different stress will also cause different influence with each individual. Even though every stress seems badly, but after people bear the stress and finally overcome it, they will realize that the life environment and the way that they used to manage problem had changed. The environment may not have changed but the way they think had already improved. Every time after I faced stress, I would analyze the causation to cause this case. Then if next time I meet the same situation, I will handle it much easier. Thinking after stress faded away is helpful to avoid same thing occurring if it is evitable. Everyone's different opinion on same stress will cause many different results, and stress doesn't mean bad things occurring, it is a great opportunity to learn life experience. Trying to find out your suitable way to reduce stress is good for everyone who is in your life.

One can notice that Mathew, like Sarah and Vincent, made use of different social languages. First, despite numerous structural errors, Mathew imbued a sense of academese into his texts: third person sentence subject (e.g., “*Different people* will have their particular attitude with same stress”), abstract sentence subjects (i.e., “*Every stress* in every different sides show dissimilar significations”), and written language features (Chafe, 1982), such as attributive adjectives (e.g., “when they got some *serious* stress”), sequences of prepositional phrases (e.g., “people who got serious stress in real life will do some mild action *to release their lose control of emotion.*”), conjoined phrases (e.g., “I can *listen to light music*, and *take a deep breath* before enjoying the pure colorful world”), participles (e.g., “*Talking and playing video game* is a good way to melt the stress.”), complement clauses (e.g., “they will realize *that the life environment* and the way *that they used to manage problem* had changed.”), and relative clauses (e.g., “I always pray whenever I felt something *which seemed to be fearful and stressful*”). Furthermore, Mathew also attempted to enact his peer identity by conveying a sense of involvement and intimacy in his written text through the use of first-person reference (e.g., “*I* mostly asked my friends to play with me, then *I* could talk with them when *I* felt uncomfortable.”), emphatic particles (e.g., “I play saxophone when I felt *really stressed*” “Then if next time I meet the same situation, I will handle it *much* easier”), and colloquial usage (e.g., “Unlike in the movie, roles usually *went crazy* when they *got stressed*”). Finally, Mathew drew from his religious practice (e.g., “I am a Christian, so I always pray”, “praying is a best way to reduce the stress for Christian”) and youth culture (e.g., “Another way that I used to melt my life stress before I became a Christian is by playing

video games”, “Talking and playing video game is a good way to melt the stress”) to address the academic task at hand, making his life world identities as devoted Christian and teenager visible and recognizable to the class as he simultaneously enacted his student and peer identities in the WebBoard.

In effect, for all of the focal students, the online forums reflected a conglomeration of identities. That is, the students were able to simultaneously enact their academic, peer, and life world identities as they wrote to responded to Ms. Jones’ initial prompt, which, as shown in my earlier analysis, aimed to shape the students into Academic Discourse. The following Table gives a glimpse of the discourses that each of the focal students drew on that reflected these identities.

Table 4

Sample Discourse from the Focal Students’ Initial Written Texts Online

	Academic discourse	Peer discourse	Life world discourse
Charlene	Environmental conditions are very important to human beings in order for us to live healthy and happily; therefore, people are very concerned about environmental issues. (Assignment 5)	Hi everyone, I am Charlene. I would like to share my exciting experience with all of you. (Assignment 1)	Many women like shopping and buying new clothes. ... What I intend to do is to apply recycle goods as part of my life. ... For example, cutting out pieces of fabric from my old clothes and making a quilt blanket. (Assignment 5)
Sheena	There are more and more environment problems cause by the developing of technology. What concerns me the most is the climate change,	I can study in the public library or at school. I can also go to the beach or hiking in the mountain. (Assignment 5)	I am from Taiwan and I speak Chinese. I like to read novels and watch Japanese cartoon in my free time. (Assignment 1)

	<p>which know as global warming and greenhouse effect. Assignment 5)</p>		
Virginia	<p>Seabiscuit was a very famous racehorse during the years of the Great Depression. Even though he did not look like a high-class horse, he was able to achieve greater popularity than his overwhelming rivals. Seabiscuit's popularity grew up because of his incredible speed and his owner's opportune marketing. (Assignment 4)</p>	<p>Hello everybody, this is Veronica. I hope you find my writing interesting and informative. 😊 (Assignment 2)</p>	<p>Sometimes, I have so much homework to do that I do not know where to start. I feel overwhelmed and I cannot concentrate in any subject. When this happens to me, I find it very helpful to make some time to walk my dog. (Assignment 3)</p>
Vincent	<p>Advertising athletes had been a popular method both today and during Seabiscuit's time. Depending on how athletes are advertised, it could be good or bad. (Assignment 4)</p>	<p>Be a teacher! I never thought about that I will be a teacher, I am still a student. I feel so funny when I received this order. How can I teach kids drawing? (Assignment1)</p>	<p>I am a designer so I use a lot of paper. I use recycled paper for my sketches and drafts, and I only use good paper for my final projects. (Assignment 5)</p>

Mathew	<p>Today, people are in a new civilization because there are numerous of high-tech industry factories were built. As a result, gaining in factories and population need more water for every single city. What worries me most is the shortage of waters in the city... To sum it up, these are my three ways to save water which are recycling daily life's water, checking out the faucet, and ways to wash dishes. (Assignment 5)</p>	<p>Hi, this is Mathew. I come from Qingdao, China. My favorite sport is soccer, and I'd like to play with you guys. ... Here, I have a question for you: Have you ever thought about the result of playing with fire when you were a child? (Assignment 1)</p>	<p>I am a Christian, so I always pray whenever I felt something which seemed to be stressful. No matter your religion is built on mentally or physically, praying is the best way to reduce the stress for Christian. (Assignment 3)</p>
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Examining the language listed in the column of academic discourse, one can note the students' formality, which fit the Academic Discourse promoted by Ms. Jones. As shown in Sarah's enactment of student identity discussed earlier, the focal students' academic discourse in the online forums was marked by the use of such written academic language features as abstract sentence subjects (e.g., "*Environmental conditions* are very important to human beings"), and other written language features such as nominalizations (e.g., "There are more and more environment problems cause by the *development* of technology"), participles (e.g., "*Advertising athletes* had been a popular method"), attribute adjectives (e.g., "he was able to achieve greater popularity than his *overwhelming rivals*"), conjoined phrases (e.g., "Seabiscuit's popularity grew up because of *his incredible speed and his owner's opportune marketing*"), sequences of

prepositional and prepositional-like phrases (e.g., “Environmental conditions are very important *to human beings in order for us to live healthy and happily*”), pre-posed subordinate clauses (e.g., “*Even though he did not look like a high-class horse*, he was able to achieve greater popularity than his overwhelming rivals”), and relative clauses (e.g., “What concerns me the most is the climate change, *which we know as global warming and greenhouse effect*”). Furthermore, not only students with an academic goal, but also those with non-academic goals, such as Vincent and Mathew, were found to learn and use formal language features and writing styles associated with the academic genre in the online forums. For example, in Mathew’s academic discourse, despite the grammatical errors he made, readers can still get a sense of *academese* in the form of thesis statements at the beginning of his written texts (i.e., “Today, people are in a new civilization because there are numerous of high-tech industry factories were built. As a result, gaining in factories and population need more water for every single city. What worries me most is the shortage of waters in the city.”) and conclusions at the end (i.e., “To sum it up, these are my three ways to save water which are recycling daily life’s water, checking out the faucet, and ways to wash dishes.”).

Reflecting their peer roles, the students drew on a broad spectrum of oral language features, attempting to involve their peers and create a sense of friendliness. The discourse listed in the column on peer discourse illustrates informality and intimacy through the students’ use of second person direct address (e.g., “*Hi everyone*, I am Charlene. “), and oral language features such as, first person references (e.g., “*I never thought about that I will be a teacher, I am still a student.*“), monitoring of information

flow (e.g., “*I hope you find my writing interesting and informative*”), exhortation (e.g., “Be a teacher!”), showing mental process (e.g., “*I would like to share my exciting experience with all of you.* “), and colloquial expression (e.g., “My favorite sport is soccer, and I'd like to play with *you guys*”). In addition, emoticons (e.g., 😊), commonly seen in teenagers’ chat room language, penetrate the students’ language use in the online forums, despite Ms. Jones’ instructing the students to avoid using chat room language.

In addition to reflecting their student and peer roles, when writing on the WebBoard, the students drew from their experiences and the knowledge they gained outside the classroom community to address the academic topics assigned by the instructor. Their written texts were often imbued with the non-school based identities they played in their home- or community-based organizations. As listed in the column on life world discourse, Charlene referred to the female practice of “making a quilt blanket from old clothes” to talk about recycling as a way to conserve resources. Her experience was responded to by another female student who appreciated and shared a similar interest with Charlene. Mathew drew from his religious practice (e.g., “I am a Christian, so I always pray”, “praying is a best way to reduce the stress for Christian”) to talk about his unique way of stress management, making his lifeworld identity as devoted Christian visible and recognizable to the class. Thus, in the WebBoard, the students not only reflected their classroom identities as student and peers, but also blended in the sociocultural identities in their life worlds outside the classroom into the official online discourse.

Opening a space for the students to display and affirm their life world identities may have affected their L2 learning experience. When asked how she felt when their peers

commented on their text online, Sarah said:

I think if someone read my writing, I will be happy if someone read my assignment, and then give me a reply. Because someone..someone read..uh 就表示有人認真的看了我寫的文章, 然後我就會覺得很高興, 很得意啊! 就會有更多的動力去寫, 因為有人看、有人感幸趣嘛!(Because when someone replied to my essay, that means they read it seriously. So I feel happy and confident. And I have more motivation to write because I know someone is reading my work and someone is interested in my work.)

Vincent also said:

如果是同學給我comment, 我會很高興, 覺得挺興奮的。就是有comment給你是件好事, 你就可以知道人家喜歡你的文章。那這就是某些方面來, 還促進你更想寫。...但問題是我真的沒時間。(When my classmates gave me comments, I felt happy about it. I felt excited. I mean it's nice to have comments, then you know people like your work. In some ways, it even motivates you to write. ... But the problem is I really don't have time for this.)

Hence, when Ms. Jones, who perceived the WebBoard as a medium that spurred student-student conversation, was willing to relegate some discourse control to the students in the WebBoard, the students' multiple identities were given a space to be affirmed by their peers and "silently" approved by Ms. Jones, rather than being dismissed or hidden as underlife as shown in my analyses of the various face-to-face classroom events in Chapter 5. Such an identity affirmation could turn to intra-personal motivation that drives

the students along the way of learning the L2.

Conclusion

As illustrated in literature on technology use in classroom, the existing values of the institution and classroom shape how teachers and students make sense of their use of technology. Situated in the Academic Discourse, Ms. Jones used the WebBoard as a venue to socialize the students into Academic Discourse and expected the students to take on their student and peer identities in specific academically focused ways. The students partially cooperated with Ms. Jones' academic expectations as, for example, they concerned themselves about the formality and correctness of their language use when writing in the online forums of the WebBoard. Nevertheless, rather than engaging with their peers solely in Academic Discourse as expected by the instructor, the communicative norms the students created through their interactions with one another emphasized building solidarity and forging friendship. Furthermore, while reflecting their classroom identities as student and peers, the students also reflected their life world identities by referring to the sociocultural membership that they were affiliated in their life worlds outside college, making their life world identities visible to and part of the online forums.

Gee's view of identity allows us to explore the students' identity enactment in the WebBoard as an intersection among the sociocultural memberships of the students, the social languages they used, and the particular discourse contexts they were situated in. That is, situated in the institutional context of Academic Discourse, the students were found to use a mixture of social languages (e.g., formal and informal, academic and

casual, written and oral) in their written texts online to convey their ideas and to communicate with one another. Speaking in multiple voices, they simultaneously reflected multiple identities through not only what they wrote, but also how they wrote as they participated in the online forums. Moreover, although the institutional and instructional contexts had the power to shape what and how they wrote, as human agents, the students also actively negotiated in the online forums what it meant to be a student, a peer, and a social being with their own sociocultural backgrounds. Hence, in Ms. Jones' Level Four ESL Block, the WebBoard was turned into a site where the students' multiple identities were recognized and affirmed and where the students could use English in varied ways outside the Academic Discourse that the instructor promoted. The forum showed them, in that sense, broadening the scope of their L2 learning.

In the next chapter, I will summarize the findings of the study, and discuss the significance of these findings in terms of L2 research and educational practice.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In discussing Discourse and identity in online language learning, I have proposed to understand L2 students' identity construction in school-based online language learning from a nested-context perspective, situating the students' emergent interaction online and the meaning they attribute to the online language learning activity in broader institutional/instructional contexts as well as in social practices and cultural norms the students participate in within their life worlds. Looking into the learning experiences of six focal students in the case-study community college ESL classroom, I have shown that identity is central to understanding what knowledge and skills these students chose to acquire and how in the process of learning ESL in this educational setting. Specifically, through the focal students' identity enactments in the classroom and in online language learning, the study illuminates how the students in varied ways complied with and entered into the Academic Discourse that is mainstream to the college, and also how they actively and individually tried to shape this Discourse through their identities as peers and members of a life world outside the classroom. They did so in ways that sometimes countered the communicative norms valued by the institution and instructor. The online context in particular provided opportunities for the students to shape complex identities and to express their multiple voices as peers and members of a world outside the classroom as they used their new language, English, to communicate with one another. In this chapter, I summarize findings of the study by referring back to the research questions I sought to address at the outset of the study and discuss implications that this study

brings for L2 research and educational practices.

Question 1: What are the dominant norms and values that the institution and the instructor attempt to socialize the ESL students into? How do the students respond and react to the norms and values upheld by the institution?

In this study, I have shown that, aligning with the common missions shared by American community colleges, RHC claimed itself an institution of multi-functions, providing academic transfer, vocational training, and community services to its students. Despite these claims, however, the discursive practices of the college and its participants suggested that facilitating academic transfer was the most salient and valued curricular function enacted in the college. Not only did the college itself implicitly and explicitly project itself as a transfer-focused college, the faculty and many of the students also recognized and co-constructed such an institutional norm. As Gee points out (2000-2001), “One cannot have an identity of any sort without some interpretive system underwriting the recognition of that identity” (p.107). Underwritten by the interpretive system that “we are a transfer-focused college,” at RHC, ESL was taken for granted as “preparing students for college” rather than for other possible functions (e.g. ESL for survival skills, ESL for vocational skills, ESL for personal growth). A “good student” at RHC, then, was equal to an *academically capable* student. As such, Academic Discourse turned out to be the dominant Discourse for ESL instruction at RHC.

Looking into the daily practices in the case-study ESL classroom, the study indicates that, in conversation with the interpretive system of the institution, the ESL curriculum functioned to socialize the students into Academic Discourse by helping them to acquire

a specific combination of *saying-being-doing-and-valuing* (Gee, 1996; 2002). In other words, the students were socialized to use, not English in general, but an academic social language, which consisted of not only certain kinds of stylistic genres, syntactic structures, and vocabulary, but also a particular thinking model that is assumed to represent the writing of the U.S. academy. They were also encouraged to take on the student dispositions assumed to be valued in American college classrooms, such as being participatory and engaged enthusiastically in classroom talk. In Gee's (1996) words, the dominant Discourse of the institution shaped the classroom curriculum, calling on the ESL students to take on an academic identity that complied with the dominant value of the institution by reading, writing, thinking, and acting as academics in North American settings were believed to do.

While examining the values and norms upheld by the institution and its effect on daily classroom practices, we should question what is missed and who is marginalized or privileged in such a value system. As Gee (1996) points out, Discourses are intrinsically political. That is, while we forward certain viewpoints or values as "standard" or "normal," we simultaneously marginalize viewpoints and values central to other Discourses. A narrow focus on academic transfer not only dismisses the versatile social functions ascribed to and undertaken by American community colleges by discursively excluding its workforce preparation and community service functions, but such a focus also marginalizes the students who choose to enroll with purposes other than academic transfer. As my analysis of the focal students' ESL learning experiences in Chapter 5 indicates, ESL students with the academic goal of getting transferred tended to comply

with the dominant Discourse of RHC with enthusiasm and hold positive attitudes toward their ESL learning experiences at RHC. They were privileged in the process of appropriating the kind of student identity and language use promoted in the classroom for such complicity aligned with their college goal and the value they perceived in a higher educational degree. On the other hand, students with non-academic goals were ambivalent in aligning with the academic identity valued by the institution due to the mismatch between their own goals for being in college, the kind of English they valued, and the dominant Discourse of the institution. They were marginalized and categorized as “less academic students” or “passive learners” by the instructor although they were excellent in their vocational or other social arenas outside the classroom, and they were seen to be quite capable of using English to perform certain social functions inside/outside the college classrooms. As such, the perceived college goal and the kind of sociocultural membership the students desired to align with appeared to mediate the students’ reactions and responses to the dominant Discourse of the college.

The study also found that the local process of identity construction in the classroom was shaped not only by the dominant Discourse of the college, but also by the beliefs and values commonly seen in the broader U.S. society. This finding is consistent with previous studies on identity construction in classrooms (e.g., Hull, et al., 1991; Willet, 1995), asserting that identity work in local classroom settings is inevitably shaped by the broader social values and cultural beliefs about what counts as normative classroom behaviors in U.S. schools. For example, Hull et al. (1991) showed how an individual student’s violation of the IRE interactional routines in classroom discourse turned out to

decrease the learning opportunities distributed to her and became an indication, for the teacher, of her cognitive disability. The Hull et al. study suggests that the discursive practices and identity work taking place in classrooms was shaped by the common assumption of U.S. society that normalizes a certain kind of interactional routine in the classroom and attributes low-achieving students' academic difficulty to cognitive disability. In a similar vein, the study that I undertook shows that through verbal interaction in the classroom, cultural beliefs commonly seen in U.S. educational settings, such as assuming ESL students' first language and culture to be a problem in learning English, acculturating ESL students into American cultural frames, and associating classroom talk with students' abilities and achievement, penetrated into classroom discourse through the instructor's role expectations of students and perception of normative classroom behaviors, and shaped what it meant to be a good student.

Question 2: How do the diverse discourses that ESL students participate in within their life worlds shape their development of student identity at school?

Literature on identity and second language learning (Goldstein, 2001; Norton, 2000; MaKay & Wang, 1996) has indicated that L2 learners mobilize within the multiple discourses in their life worlds—the sociocultural membership they are affiliated with outside school—to assign meanings and values to their language learning activities at school. They consciously select their school identities in relation to the social values and cultural norms of the discourse communities they inhabit outside school. In accordance with this strand of literature, this study, focusing on the population of community college ESL students, finds that the cultural norms and role expectations that the community

college ESL students took on in their life worlds outside college shaped their college goals, student identities, and investment in ESL learning. The focal students were found to draw from the discourses valued in their home and in their community-based organizations, such as proper gender behaviors, Confucian cultural values, and the social identities they assumed in their workplace or religious community, to assign meaning to their college education and to respond to the academic identity the college and the ESL instructor summoned them to take on. For example, since Confucian cultural values highlight the place of family in an individual's life and stresses paying back the benevolence of parents as the basic virtue of filial piety, the young Chinese students I studied were found to incorporate such values to interpret their college education, seeing going to college and getting transferred into universities not only as a self-advancement but also as a way to comply with the Confucian cultural values regarding their social identity as daughters/sons in the family. Thus, they strove hard to appropriate Academic Discourse and to align with the identity of academic-oriented students, for such an alignment not only defined who they were at school, but also their social role in their home-based community. When learning ESL, they valued and strove hard to acquire the kind of academic written language use that was promoted in the classroom because an investment in academic written language was perceived as an investment in the academic identity they desired to align with.

However, this study indicates that, while they may have enrolled with similar college goals, community college ESL students did not reflect a common school experience. Finding a balance in one's sense of self appeared to be a more complicated

task for older female students or those coming from lower socioeconomic status. Due to the overt conflict between the dominant Discourse of the college and their home-based Discourse, these students were found to suffer more tension as they strove to align with the academic identity that the college summoned them to take on. For example, Virginia had to battle with financial constraints while she enacted the identity of an academic student. Charlene had to compete with her biological clock in order to strike a balance between the gender expectations of her family and her college goal. Hence, although Gee suggests that Discourses are harder to acquire and often tension-filled for those who have come to them without previous knowledge, skills, and values from their primary or other secondary Discourses, the stories of Charlene and Virginia suggest that within the population of community college ESL students, not all the students go through a similar process and equal amount of tension in acquiring the dominant Discourse of school.

In discussing the intersection of community college ESL students' school identity and the discourses they participate in within their life worlds, the study finds that human agency played a central role in the students' enactment of school identity and the process of ESL learning. From a social-constructivist point of view, while broader social structures impose constraints on human actions, as human beings act on and respond to the same constraints, they continuously alter and recreate them. In this process, human agency prompts people to negotiate with and recreate the existing cultural norms and social practices of larger social structures (e.g., Golden, 2001; Norton, 2000). This study adds to this strand of literature by showing that, while the larger social structures placed constraints on them, drawing from individual agency, these community college ESL

students tried to negotiate and reshape existing structural constraints. For example, the home-based gender practices of women getting married and giving birth at a “desirable” age appeared to interfere with Charlene’s college goal of getting transferred to a four-year university. Nevertheless, rather than being subjugated to the gendered social practices of her home-based community as shown in Goldstein’s (2001) study of Portuguese female ESL learners in Canada, Charlene was willing to transgress the gender expectation of her home community, working extra hard to acquire academic English and perform her academic identity for she was propelled by the sense of cultural approbation that a bachelor’s degree would bring her. In a similar vein, choosing to pursue a vocational-oriented goal, Vincent and Mathew were hesitant to align with the academic identity promoted by the college, and deemphasized the acquisition of academic writing in their ESL learning process. These stories suggest that ESL students do not necessarily subjugate themselves to the existing institutional norms or cultural values of larger social structures. As human agents, they actively choose the kind of affiliation they desire to identify with and the kind of membership they desire to connect to. These community college ESL students challenged and recreated the dominant values and norms of the larger social structures.

Question 3: How do ESL students enact their social identities through their discursive practices of online language learning? How is such identity enactment related to the Discourse of the institution and the discourses students participate in within their life worlds outside school?

According to Gee (1996), one’s identity is enacted through an interaction of one’s

social or cultural group memberships, use of social language(s), and the particular context. Situated in an institutional/instructional context which highlights Academic Discourse, the community college ESL students participating in this study were found to use a mixture of social languages (formal language vs. informal language, written language vs. oral language, academic language vs. everyday language) to enact multiple identities that reflected their memberships in the classroom community as well as their life worlds. Situating the students' interview talk and the texts written in the class online forums in broader institutional, instructional, and life world contexts, the study indicates that, to align with Academic Discourse and display a sense of academese, the students enacted their online identities in multiple ways: by (a) stressing the formality of their language and using language that contained written academic features, essentially directing it to the course instructor; (b) choosing discourse that contained oral language features and positive politeness strategies to share common ground with their peers and create a sense of intimacy and friendliness to their student peers; and (c) drawing from the sociocultural memberships that they were affiliated with outside the college classroom to address the academic topics assigned by the instructor. Their written texts online were often inscribed with the non-school based identities they played in home- or community-based organizations.

The study shows that the students' identity enactment online reproduces as well as recreates the dominant Discourse of the college. That is, while situating in Academic Discourse, the students were found to not only align with Academic Discourse, enacting their academic identity as expected by the instructor, but also actively shaped Academic

Discourse by referring to the sociocultural membership in their life worlds outside college and reinforcing friendship and affinity as they interacted with one another in the class online forums. As indicated in the above discussion on how, as human agents, the students negotiated their sense of being a student within the college, findings from the students' identity enactment online corroborate with this notion by showing that, drawing on their peer and life world discourses, the students participated in the Academic Discourse with "negotiation," and, thus rewrote the interactional dynamics and identity expectations underwritten by the dominant Discourse of the college. As such, the students turned the WebBoard into a site where their life world identities co-existed with their peer and student identities as well as being recognized and affirmed by the class, showing the potential to positively affect their L2 learning.

The study also found that the identities that the students desired to affiliate with mediated their investment in school-based online language learning activities. This finding echoes literature on L2 learning and identity, asserting identity plays a central role in mediating L2 learners' participation in language learning activities (see reviews in Block, 2007; Ricento, 2005). As the analysis of the students' participation in the class online forums shows, students with academic goals regarded the class online forums as investment-inspiring, for they regarded participation in the online forums as helping to achieve their college goal by furnishing them with the kind of written English skills they needed in their academic futures and, therefore, were willing to engage in the online forums with enthusiasm. On the other hand, for students with non-academic goals, participation in the online forums was interpreted as simply an act of completing a course

assignment rather than developing the kind of English they valued. Their strategic participation, therefore, reflected a student identity that downplayed the importance of cultivating academic skills. Unlike other studies, however, this one showed how, despite the students' interpretations of academic investment, their participation online showed the versatility with which they juggled their identities as they used English.

Implications for Research

Looking into Discourse and identity in online language learning, this study brings several implications to research on online language learning and identity construction in educational/classroom contexts. First, focusing on the construct of learner identity, the study is able to show the process of identity negotiation in computer-mediated communication, a communication genre gaining popularity in L2 classrooms, and the central role identity plays in shaping L2 students' participation in school-based online language learning activities. As L2 researchers interested in online language learning attempt to illuminate the interaction between contextual features and learning L2 online (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004; Shin, 2006; Ware, 2004), this study adds the construct of identity into the sociocultural landscape of online language learning, and brings an alternative perspective to understanding online language learning in the social turn of second language studies.

Furthermore, linking analysis of interaction with a qualitative account to capture the broader sociocultural contexts where L2 students were situated, this study was able to avoid the pitfalls of many previous studies on online language learning by showing the L2 students' identity enactment online as a reproduction as well as recreation of the

values and norms of the broader sociocultural contexts. Adopting a product-oriented approach, many previous studies in online language learning have asserted that online communication has the potential to transform the traditional teacher-centered classroom dynamic by stimulating student-to-student interaction, facilitating more democratic participation, and decreasing teacher control in the classroom. This study, however, in following students' verbal interactions in different learning contexts, suggests that the medium itself doesn't necessarily change classroom dynamics. The capacity of online communication in transforming traditional teacher-centered classroom dynamic and recreating the existing communicative norms of the face-to-face classroom has to be understood in a holistic institutional/instructional context with reference to the subject positions that L2 students desire to identify with inside/outside school and the human agency that L2 students draw on in learning and using their L2 in different learning contexts. Without taking these contextual characteristics into consideration, it could be misleading to valorize online communication in restructuring classroom communication based solely on L2 students' textual production out of context and generalize the democratic interactional dynamics to all instructional settings. Hence, more research in comparable contextually-rich analysis is needed to bring a fuller perspective on online language learning.

The methodology adopted in this study also shows that language use plays a central role in understanding L2 students' identity enactment, not only in face-to-face classroom interaction as many L2 researchers have seen, but also in the context of online communication. By situating the students' language use online in the

institutional/instructional contexts and the life worlds that they participated in outside school, this study was able to find the multiple voices within the students' linguistic practices and tease out the relationship between their linguistic practices and the multiple identities they enacted online. Future research on online communication should pay attention to the students' language use in context in relation to the social interaction online.

Focusing on L2 students' identities as reflected in online communication, this study extends L2 researchers' understanding of identity construction to the online context, considering the effect of school-based online communication on L2 students' identity construction. In particular, this study propels L2 researchers to consider the kind of social space that a computer-mediated community affords L2 students in negotiating their identities and forming counter discourses against the imposition of dominant academic ones. Discussing the relationship between classroom identities and L2 learning, Canagarajah (2004) made the following observation:

Despite the fascinating theoretical advances we have made in [language acquisition studies and literacy instruction], I sense a dilemma for researchers when they study learner identities in classroom contexts.

Though they are theoretically attuned to representing the resistance of students to unfavorable identities imposed on them, they don't have any evidence for such complex acts of negotiation in their corpi. In many cases, they find that students appear to take on the unitary identities (shaped by notions of deficiency, inferiority, and disadvantage) conferred on them by

the dominant discourse. (pp117-118)

Although, in her study, Canagarajah (2004) was able to find some *safe houses*, defined as “a space where students could adopt more hybrid identities deriving from the heterogeneous discourses they were competent in,” (p. 123) to engage in critical identity negotiation, these safe houses are usually hidden as underlife in institutional contexts, such as asides between students, passing of notes, peer activities, marginalia in textbooks, before classes begin, after classes are officially over, and unofficial email exchanges with peers. My analysis of the students’ accommodation of their prior language and culture in the discourse site of the face-to-face classroom community in Chapter 5 also shows that, in face-to-face classroom communication, the students had to hide their cultural and ethnic identities in the underlife of the classroom (e.g., switching code only when Ms. Jones was absent from the scene) or they might risk the danger of losing face (e.g., the response of the Hispanic student in the scenario of American rodeo vs. the Mexican horse tripping). Moreover, when enacting the student identity in their own cultural way, the students were categorized as “passive” or as “irresponsible learners” by the instructor, who stressed the American way of learning through verbal interaction. It appears that, in face-to-face classroom interaction, L2 students’ life world experiences and knowledge tended to be unrecognized or disavowed by the instructor and they needed to counter this situation.

Findings from the study, however, show the potential of school-based online communication in opening up a safe house for L2 students to negotiate their identities in official discourse sites. The students’ identity enactment in the class online forums

indicates that their deviation from Academic Discourse and their enactment of life world identities were publicly recognized and affirmed by their peers, and “silently” approved by the instructor, who perceived the online forums as a venue to spur conversations among students and, therefore, was willing to relegate some control over the students. Thus, a pedagogical safe house was open, though not an intention of Ms. Jones, for the students to reconstruct the classroom interactional norms, and negotiate their identities. Future research in identity construction in classroom contexts should note L2 students’ identity negotiations in online communication, considering how social practices in school-based computer-mediated communities affect L2 students’ school experiences and identity.

Implications for Educational Practices

Findings of the study suggest that it is important for educational practitioners to recognize ESL students as complex social beings who are simultaneously members of multiple discourse communities, rather than assuming them attending schools with the sole goal of assimilating to the target language community. Numerous studies have shown that L2 students are involved in multiple sociolinguistic communities and strive to maintain dual identities—learning English to join the new English-speaking community while also maintaining membership with their home language and culture. This study also finds that the ESL students who participated in the study were closely affiliated with the home- and community-based organizations and referred to the values and practices of their home culture to make sense of their school identities and school-based language learning activities while they strove to learn ESL for their academic/career future in the

U.S. Thus, the common assumption that L2 students who arrive in the U.S. have the goal of assimilating and losing their native language and culture do not apply, particularly in the era of globalization when there are more and more communities that transcend nation-state boundaries and many immigrants are more affiliated to these communities than to the nation- state (Block, 2007; Ricento, 2005). Educators need to understand that the identities of their L2 students are deeply connected to their status as members of distinct, but interrelated, communities, and recognize the students' distinct linguistic and cultural practices as valuable resources, rather than devaluing them as problematic. Instead of seeing L2 learning as helping the students move from one discourse community into another, it might be more helpful to view our task as adding to or complicating the students' language repertoire.

Focusing on how identity mediates ESL students' investment in school-based language learning activities, both online and off line, this study illuminates that what L2 students choose to learn and how they approach school-based language learning activities are ultimately related to the identities and memberships that they are affiliated with. Hence, rather than using online communication as a means to impose or reproduce the dominant discourse or learn the target language structures, L2 educators should consider how to employ online communication in their language classrooms to help the students critically reflect on their relationships with the multiple worlds they inhabit. For example, in a comparative study of using electronic media in four language classrooms, Warschauer (1999) reported a case of a university-based ESL classroom in Hawaii where electronic communication was used as a means to engage the students in dialogues with

peers and the teacher to critically reflect on their relationships with the U.S. academic community with references to the academic communities of the students' home countries. Engaging in such dialogical interaction, one of the students, who was coping with cultural differences between Japan and the United States in terms of what was expected from students, was found to create her own understanding of what academic networking means for her in her own social context and achieve a new understanding of her role as a graduate student, combining the perspectives of her classmates, her teacher, and herself. Warschauer (1999) notes the four teachers participating in his study used electronic media in a variety of ways, "ranging from assisting students with language form to helping them gain critical awareness of the context of their work. ... [The] latter is too often neglected, even in progressive classrooms (p.165). Nevertheless, it is engaging L2 students in critical literacy to actively reflect on their role relationships with the multiple discourse communities they participate in and analyze how social relations are constructed in different sociocultural contexts that empowers L2 students to resist the unfavorable identities ascribed to them and construct new forms of identity and solidarity as English users and learner (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

As integrating online communication in L2 language classrooms and socializing L2 students into this new form of communicational media has become crucial when teaching ESL in the electronic age (Warschauer, 2004; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000), I suggest that L2 practitioners use online communication in ways that empower students, giving them more control over the discourse and engaging them in dialogues to critically reflect on their role relations with people in their multiple life worlds inside and outside school

and their associated discourses. For example, in the case of integrating WebBoard in the Level Four ESL Block, it was fortunate that Ms. Jones, who perceived online communication as a medium that spurs student-student conversation, was willing to relegate some control to the students in the class online forums, and gave her students a safe house to enact the multiple facets of their identities, even though some of them overthrew her role expectations. Nevertheless, instead of passively observing the students' online interaction and assigning grades to their online written texts with a focus on the language structures, Ms. Jones could have gone further to empower the students if she had perceived the diverse linguistic and cultural practices embedded in the students' discourse online as rich resources and had actively engaged with them into dialogues that critically reflect on their relationships with the academic communities in U.S. vis-a-vis their home countries or their life world identities vis-à-vis their academic identities at school. Thus, L2 learning online could become not only an opportunity for gaining access to the standard language or dominant discourse, but a process of developing critical awareness and a process for self and social transformation.

This study, focusing on the population of community college ESL students, also brings implications to the policy and practices of community colleges. Since American community colleges undertake multiple social functions and enroll students with diverse educational goals, findings from the study suggest that community college should have broader and diverse curriculum goals to accommodate the diverse student populations they serve, rather than solely focusing on the function of academic transfer and marginalizing students enrolling with non-academic goals. Thus, in ESL departments,

curriculum should design to target on not only academic ESL, but also vocational ESL and literacy ESL to address the diverse needs of ESL students. Furthermore, as American community colleges enroll a larger portion of student of older age and coming from lower socioeconomic status than the other sectors of higher educational organization in the U.S., more structural supports and services (e.g., financial aids, and child caring) should be provided to help ESL students with older age or lower socioeconomic status to navigate their educational pathway as findings of the study indicates these students tend to face more social constraints and struggle more in accomplishing their college goals.

Limitation of the study

Focusing on the process of identity socialization and negotiation, the scope of this study is limited to one ESL classroom situated in a particular community college, which emphasized academic transfer as the institutional norm. A comparable study conducted in another institution which emphasizes curriculum functions other than academic transfer can help to illuminate how Discourse interacts with the process of L2 students' identity shaping and negotiation. Such a comparison may also illuminate how different dominant Discourses of institutions affect the role expectations, interactional patterns, and linguistic practices observed in school-based online language learning.

Furthermore, the study could have advanced our understanding of identity negotiation in classroom contexts if sociolinguistic data, such as code switching in peer work or the interactions among the students before/after the classroom, was documented and systematically analyzed. Given that the study is mainly designed with the interest of exploring identity construction online, data that illuminates the students' identity

negotiation and contestation to the dominant Discourse in the face-to-face classroom mainly relies on my observation and description from my field notes. If discourse data that documents the students' social interaction in classroom underlife had been gathered, I would have had more evidence for understanding the process of identity negotiation in the face-to-face classroom.

Finally, the interpretation of the students' life world discourse in this study relies exclusively on the students' interview data, rather than data from multiple sources, such as following them to their work places or churches and documenting their activities and affiliations within these communities. Moreover, many of the focal students reported they frequently participated in non-school-based online communities and organized their affiliation with distant friends and family members through online networking tools, such as Facebook, Friendsters, MicroSoft Network Messenger, and QQ Online chat. Getting access to their life worlds outside school and obtain hard data documenting their role relationships and activities in these communities could have revealed a stronger relationship between their life world identities and school identities.

Coda

One of the assumptions that qualitative researchers hold is that there are particularities and universalities within each social institution (Erickson, 1986). Hence, findings of a qualitative study, rather than providing rules that can be generalized from a sample to a larger population disregarding the particularities of each social institution, seek to furnish readers with *intellectual instrumentalities* (Dewey, cited by Bellack, 1978) and offer a *surrogate experience* (Wehlage, 1981, p. 214) to indirectly guide readers' interpretations of social practices in their own situational context. Although the study is

limited in its scope to a single case of a college-level ESL class and a small number of focal students, it is my hope that findings from the study can provide educational practitioners and researchers who are interested in L2 learning, identity construction, and online learning a surrogate experience to think through the many complex issues involved in L2 learning online when it comes to their own practices. Rather than providing a single definitive answer to the effective use of online communication in L2 classrooms, the study aims to engage readers in active reflection on and reconstruction of social practices within their own situational context, draw their attention to the effect of identity on shaping student learning, and to the role broader sociocultural contexts play in shaping social interaction in online language learning.

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Appendix A

Transcription Convention

, segment between a chunk of speech

. end of a chunk of speech

.. short pause

... omission

? rising intonation on utterance

! exhilaration

CAPITAL emphatic stress on capitals

() English translation

[] transcriber's note on speakers' paralinguistic acts (e.g. physical action, loud laugh, chuckle, tones that show disappointment or disparage, and abnormal speech speed)

Overlap overlap speech

XXXX inaudible or illegible speech

“ “ indirect speech

~ prolonged speech (e.g., O~h, w~ow)