COSMOPOLITANISM AND LEARNING ENGLISH: PERSPECTIVES FROM HYE LAN ALIAS JOANNE

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Situated against a backdrop constituted by the globalized flows of people (Appadurai, 1996), this paper examines the language acquisition dynamics of a young Korean woman learning English at an American university. By adopting a view of language as a form of semiotic reconstruction (Pennycook, 2007), I explore her attempts to gain membership in an imagined cosmopolitan community which values English proficiency and the ability to inhabit different cultural worlds. Drawing on data from interviews, home visits, and classroom-based interaction, and using positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), I demonstrate how her learning trajectory is characterized by a politics of recognition (Luke, 2009) as her learning enterprise becomes a case of recognized and misrecognized capital. By analyzing the micropolitical processes involved in learning English, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of cosmopolitan learners whose experiences have not been fully recognized, much less studied, in contemporary SLA research.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, imagined communities, investment, symbolic capital, politics of recognition, positioning theory

> Globalization is, as we know, a layered phenomenon and not every globalized subject is equal: some are called "cosmopolitans" and others "vagabonds" (as Zygmund Bauman observed), and while some "visit" countries, others "sneak into" them. (Blommaert, 2008, p.81)

`   As the above quote suggests, globalization has created new issues of inequality between "cosmopolitans" and "vagabonds". Echoing a similar perspective, the educational philosopher, Popkewitz (2008) has argued that cosmopolitanism is a tool that simultaneously includes, abjects, and excludes. To some extent, this may have influenced the shape of research on second language learners as more work has been conducted on the latter group, that is, the "vagabonds." Research on refugees (e.g., Menard-Warwick, 2005; Warriner, 2004, 2007a, 2007b) and asylum seekers (e.g., Blommaert, 2005;

Cooke, 2006), for instance, has focused on the challenges encountered by these learners. However, there appears to be a general dearth in research on "cosmopolitans". With the notable exception of Block's (2006) examination of French teachers in London, Piller and Takahashi's (2005) study of five female Japanese ESL learners at a Sydney university, and Park's (2009) work on a female Korean woman enrolled in a TESOL program, there has been a comparative lack of research on this ostensibly "advantaged" group of learners.

On the surface, cosmopolitan learners appear to be equipped with capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1991) that vagabond learners lack; but on closer analysis, we realize that like their economically less advantaged counterparts, cosmopolitans also suffer from a symbolic capital deficit as instantiated through a lack of recognition by legitimate authority. This deficit is amplified when cast against a globalized backdrop where languages are commodified (Heller, 2003; Song, 2009). Such a commodification of languages, in particular English, also brings into sharp focus the different values that are indexed to languages. The Japanese ESL learners in Piller and Takahashi's (2005) study, for example, are lured by the prospective gains that English offers, and hence engage in ways to convert their desires into reality by mobilizing the resources at their disposal. Also underscoring the symbolic capital (i.e., prestige and honor) that English affords, Song (2009), who worked with mothers of Korean immigrant children in the U.S., demonstrates how the community she studied saw Global English as being necessary for cosmopolitan membership. Similarly, Han Nah, Park's (2009) Korean focal learner, underlines how English has become a requisite skill for cosmopolitan membership as she notes: " '… I want my children to become a kind of international, knowing both Korean and English languages as well as culture ….' (Interview, January, 2005)" (p.182).

Significantly, in their pursuit of cosmopolitan credentials, many learners in the SLA identity literature participate in imagined communities (cf. Anderson, 1991) as their language learning experiences are characterized by moves which indicate their investment (Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000, 2001) in these imagined communities. Norton (2001), for instance, asserts that "[a] learner's imagined community invite[s] an imagined identity, and a learner's investment in the target language must be understood within this context" (p.166). Equally interesting is Lin's (2008) observation that under globalization, the role of the imagination in people's social life has become more important. Such an increased role can be attributed to the fact that imagination, as Wenger (1998) astutely puts it, is "a process of expanding one-self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (p.176). In short, imagination appears to be an effective way with dealing with changes brought about by globalization.

The notions of cosmopolitanism, investment, symbolic capital, and imagined communities are brought together in Kanno's (2003, 2008) research. Crucially, her work reveals how processes of social stratification socialize the

least privileged children into the most impoverished imagined communities, while those with more symbolic capital such as Japanese children from socially dominant communities, are granted a more cosmopolitan vision of Japan. Indeed, as Kanno and Norton (2003) remind us, membership into these imagined communities comes at a price. Cosmopolitan imagined community membership is often measured by proficiency in English, and the ability to transverse cultural worlds. Also, we learn that many aspiring candidates are turned away as they lack the requisite symbolic capital, thereby rendered "inaudible" (Miller, 2003) or "culturally unintelligible" (Butler, 1990).

LANGUAGE AS SEMIOTIC CONSTRUCTION AND POSITIONING

The commodification of English and the attendant need to realign oneself with a desired imagined cosmopolitan community calls for a reconstitution of languages along semiotic lines. This semiotic turn which views language in non-essentialist terms is mapped out by Makoni and Pennycook (2006) who argue convincingly for a departure from a structuralist view of language as conceptualized by Saussure which they argue has caused languages to be viewed as separate and enumerable. This semiotic perspective also places identity at the center. Drawing on Butler's (1990) performativity theory of identity which views identity in fluid and dynamic terms, Pennycook (2007) has further called for language to be reconceptualized as a refashioning of identities (see also, Lin, 2008; Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009), in keeping with the contemporary reality of global English being bound up with transcultural flows.

This interpretation of identities as hybrid and multiple is also congruent with critical poststructural perspectives which view language as being fused with gender, social class, race, and sexual orientation in ways that result in social inequality (Blommaert, 2008; Luke, 2009; Norton, 2000; Park, 2009; Warriner, 2004). These perspectives, while maintaining that language invokes a whole repertoire of personae, also often foreground the agency of learners. Norton (2000), for instance, highlights Eva's resourcefulness in ensuring that she is a conversation-worthy candidate at her work place, while Warriner (2004) illustrates how Ayak, Alouette, and Moria – her Sudanese refugee learners – creatively and strategically use the resources available to them.

As encouraging as the experiences of these aforementioned learners may be, we also need to acknowledge Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004) observation that in many contexts, certain identities may not be negotiable because people may be positioned in powerful ways which they are unable to resist. After all, as Luke (2009) reminds us, language learning is ultimately a politics of recognition. Such identity politics is elucidated by Davies and Harré's (1990) positioning theory which posits that speakers claim identities for themselves ("reflexive positioning"), while assigning identities to others ("interactive positioning"). In fact, several second language scholars (e.g.,

Hawkins, 2005; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Miller, 2009), who have heeded McKay and Wong's (1996, p.579) call to examine how learners are "both positioned by relations of power and resistant to that positioning", have adopted this theoretical construct to account for the language acquisition processes of their learners.

In this paper, I adopt a more recent adaptation of Davies and Harré's (1990) positioning theory as delineated by Harré and van Langenhove (1999). The latter's framework comprises (a) self-positioning (i.e., taking a particular stance to achieve a particular goal), (b) other positioning (i.e., positioning the other person in a particular way), (c) first order positioning (i.e., acceptance of the other person's positioning without challenging it), and (d) strategic positioning (i.e., adoption of a particular position to force the other person to reposition herself). Using this theory, I examine how notions of cosmopolitanism, investment, symbolic capital, and imagined communities influenced the learning trajectory of a young Korean woman learning English at an American university. The case of this young adult Korean ESL learner is crucial because, as someone who transverses physical and cultural borders, she is representative of a growing number of ESL learners whom we encounter in our classrooms.

METHOD

In the fall of 2005, I worked with Hye Lan (a pseudonym), the spouse of a Korean graduate student. Hye Lan identified herself as Joanne (also a pseudonym) at our first meeting. I thought her choice of a Western name interesting, but not uncommon when considered in the light of Kim's (1996, p.573; as cited in Thompson, 2006, p.179) observation that "names [are] changed or adopted for use in a new lands," and are often "taken on as part of an effort to forge a new self, a new life". To maintain fidelity to her request that she be addressed in my research by her Western name, I refer to my focal learner as Joanne throughout this paper. Indeed, Joanne was starting a new life in many ways. Twenty-four years old, she had gotten married nine months earlier and followed her husband, Seung-ri, who had come to a university in the American Midwest to pursue his Master's degree. Joanne had earned a degree in economics from a Korean university, and had started learning English in middle school. This continued through high school, with a break in English language instruction at university. Like other spouses of international graduate students at the time, she held an F-2 visa, which neither allowed her to enter a degree program nor to have a paid job. She could, however, take courses as a non-matriculated student. Hence, shortly after arriving in the U.S., she enrolled herself in an intermediate level ESL class offered by the university. This class met everyday, Monday through Friday. A graduate student at the time, I conducted a semester-long study of her English language development.

Several second language researchers (e.g., Langman, 2004; Menard-Warwick, 2004; Warriner, 2004, Park, 2009) have argued in favor of using narratives to illustrate the performance of identity. Langman (2004), for instance, contends that narratives provide an emic perspective on the language learning process and allow for a nuanced understanding of how they perceive access to resources for learning language and construct new identities. Admittedly, the in-depth interview narratives examined by these researchers have provided invaluable insights into how languages are learned. However, I would add that such narratives can be complemented and supplemented by video-taped data of classroom discourse and field notes made during observations outside the language classroom. Classroom discourse data (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Zuengler & Miller, 2008), in particular, represent fruitful ways to illustrate how identities are represented and enacted by language learners as they allow us to examine how learners position themselves and in turn position others. In this article, I present data from interviews with Joanne, field notes made during a visit to her home, and classroom interaction. Such a decision to present the various types of collected data is motivated by Holstein and Gubrium's (2005, p.492) call to participate in a "new hybridized analytics of reality construction", and Holliday's (2005) exhortation to engage in thick description which he describes as "a process of getting at increased richness and showing interconnectedness [between data sets]" (p.308).

To facilitate my analyses of the different data, I used Strauss and Corbin's (1990) coding strategies. In keeping with their practice of open coding, I wrote down anything that came to my mind while reviewing my field notes, the video-taped data, and the audio-taped interviews. This helped me ground my analysis thoroughly in the data. Following this, I used the axial and selective coding processes of breaking down, examining and conceptualizing my data. Axial coding allowed me to assess whether the codes should be identified as categories, collapsed into other codes, or further separated into sub-codes. Then, at the selective stage, I revisited the data and organized them into the central categories of gender, race, and class which emerged from the data and which I discovered were fused with Joanne's learning of English.

Explicit care was taken in the coding exercise and analyses in light of Ramanathan's (2005a, p. 291) observation that researchers are an integral part of those they study, and Freeman *et al.*'s assertion (2007, p.27) that researchers can never be neutral as they are "always positioned culturally, historically, and theoretically". I was particularly cognizant of this for two reasons. First, as a teaching assistant in the ESL program which ran the course Joanne was enrolled in, I found myself on familiar ground even though I was not her instructor. Second, as an international student from Singapore, we shared some common ground as Joanne and I were both students from Asian countries who were negotiating a foreign educational system. However, I realized that my capacity as a male ESL instructor and doctoral student inevitably presented me with a different set of identity options from Joanne. Overall, this contributed towards a series of insider/outsider tensions that

Ramanathan (2005b) articulates. I highlight these tensions to underscore how my own location in relation to this study inevitably shaped the texture of my interactions with Joanne and my interpretations of them.

THE INVESTED LEARNER AND THE COSMOPOLITAN

Earlier, I mentioned that Joanne's choice of a Western name can be interpreted as an attempt on her part to forge a new life for herself[1]. Indeed, as Thompson (2006) points out, names are elements of language fraught with complicated social implications. A more complicated social implication in Joanne's case was her desire to position herself as an invested learner and a cosmopolitan to which I turn next.

Joanne the invested learner
Joanne's investment in learning manifested itself in several ways. First, she had signed up for the ESL class on her own accord, and was willing to pay top dollar for it. Her tuition fee for the semester was US$3600 – an exorbitant amount given that neither she nor Seung-ri were employed at the time of the study. Next, that she was a committed learner was demonstrated by her willingness to seek an American conversation partner through the university's GUTS (Greater University Tutoring Service) program whom she met every Thursday morning for an hour over coffee. When asked by me (P) about her motivation for learning English, Joanne (J) identified two broad objectives. The first was to improve her English so that she could conduct day-to-day social interactions like buying groceries.

1   P: Why are you learning English?

2   J: I, I … because I am staying in here. So I must study English. Cos I want to buy something, I cannot speak English.

The second objective was to land a good job when she returned to Korea.

6   P: Ok, let's see. Like when you're in Korea, and if you can speak English, what do people think of you?

7   J: Oh, I understand. If I can speak English very well, people think "Oh you can take up good job." Yes, English is so important in Korea.

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[1] As noted earlier, Hye Lan had requested that she be addressed by her Western name, Joanne. I surmised from my interview with her (Interview 1, September 15, 2005) that this request was motivated in part by her desire to construct a new life for herself in the US.

(Interview 1, September 15, 2005)

Later, during a separate visit to her home, I learned from Seung-ri that the couple had no concrete plans for the future but they were considering the possibility of Joanne working in the Atlanta office of his father's safe manufacturing business, or of her starting a Master's degree in TESL so that she could return to Korea as an ESL teacher[2]. From these brief data excerpts, we see that Joanne seems to have an abundant supply of capital. Unlike the Sudanese refugee learners in Warriner's (2004, p.293) study who lacked "the financial resources or social networks to put those institutional credentials to use in findings what they consider to be a 'good job'", Joanne appears to be amply blessed with economic capital (she could afford to enroll herself in the university course) and social capital (she had the option to work at her father-in-law's Atlanta firm). However, on closer inspection, we realize that Joanne also shares similarities with Warriner's focal learners. Like them, she is limited in her ability to use English to deal with everyday situations such as shopping. Also, just as Ayak's, Alouette's, and Moria's lives (Warriner's focal learners) are determined by their husbands' positions, we see how Joanne's life is determined by her gendered spousal identity. After all, she moved to the U.S. to follow Seung-ri who started graduate school. This resulted in her assuming a visa status which prevented her from pursuing a graduate degree herself, or seeking employment opportunities. Her future plans also seemed to be contingent on his plans: if Seung-ri stayed in the U.S., presumably in Atlanta, she would probably work at his father's firm. In other words, Seung-ri's educational and professional trajectory became a deciding factor in Joanne's educational and professional identities (see also Park, 2009). What is significant to note though is that an uncertain future did not dampen Joanne's desire to learn English.

Joanne the cosmopolitan
By having the "luxury" of choosing between pursuing employment in the U.S. and furthering her study to become an ESL teacher, Joanne embodies the "cosmopolitan citizen" (Kenway & Bullen, 2005), that is, someone who has a choice of building a life on two separate continents. Such an option was made available to her because of the cultural capital she had accumulated through her prior education. This capital in turn was fused with her investment in learning English and her desire to be a member in an imagined cosmopolitan community. Not only was she part of the *ethnoscapes* (i.e., the movement of the world's peoples) that Appadurai (1996) writes about, she was

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[2] During my home visit, Seung-ri revealed their plans to raise their children in the US so that the latter would become effectively bilingual in Korean and English (Field notes, November 15, 2005). Based on this comment, I inferred that the couple were more inclined to live in the US in the long term than to return to Korea.

also able to tap into the *mediascapes* (i.e., the movement of images and ideas in popular cultures) that Appadurai alludes to. Such a capacity became both representative and constitutive of her investment. This became evident when she disclosed her penchant for American films during an interview:

17   J: Ah, 2 weeks ago I went to movie theatre, my classmate and me go to, went to University Square, we saw *Just Like Heaven* but we don't understand the tale, so we, we just guess.
18   P: That's good that you tried to guess. Right, so there are some things
19   J: that you understand, and some things that you're not sure. Just a little I understand. A lot I don't understand.

(Interview 1, September 15, 2005)

Perhaps what is admirable about Joanne from this exchange is that she goes to the theatre to watch American films even though she does not fully understand them. If anything, one can argue, these films fuel her imagination. This is noted by Appadurai (1996) who observes that

> … the imagination has now acquired a singular new power in social life …. One important source of this change is the *mass media*, which presents a rich, ever-changing store of *possible lives*, some of which enter the lived imagination of ordinary people more successfully than others…. (p. 53, italics added)

Indeed, Joanne is one of the more "successful" people in that she does have some cultural capital to position herself as a cosmopolitan. Perhaps because of this, she is not discouraged by her lack of understanding of the films. Instead, she generally watches these films and makes a bold attempt to figure them out by making intelligent guesses and then discussing the films with another ESL classmate.

In addition to being an avid fan of films, Joanne enjoyed cartoon shows of which *The Simpsons* was her favorite. Laden with a fair bit of cultural innuendo, *The Simpsons* may not have been completely accessible to her, but she was not discouraged by this. By identifying this cartoon, Joanne inadvertently draws a comparison between herself and Eva, the immigrant English language learner in Pierce's (1995) study. Eva recorded in her journal the following incident which transpired between her and Gail, her anglophonic Canadian colleague:

> "Don't you know him?"
> "No, I don't know him."
> "How come you don't know him. Don't you watch TV. That's Bart Simpson."
> It made me feel so bad and I didn't answer her nothing. Until now I

don't know why this person was important.

Eva, February 8, 1991 (cited in Pierce, 1995, p.10)

However, unlike Eva who was clueless about *The Simpsons*, it appears that Joanne had a head start as she was acquainted with the iconic Bart Simpson and his family. Such a head start may be attributed to the fact that unlike Eva who only had a high school diploma when she arrived in Canada and spoke no English, Joanne by contrast had already earned an undergraduate degree upon arriving in the US.

CAPITAL RECOGNITION

By positioning herself as a keen consumer of American culture, Joanne seemed to embody the spirit of cultural cosmopolitanism which Held (2002, pp. 57-58) defines as "the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities of fate and alternative styles of life". Such a mediation was possible because of the cultural capital available to her. This became evident during a visit to her home and is captured in the field notes below.

> After walking through the door and greeting Seung-ri and her, Joanne gently reminded me to take my shoes off. I had brought a gift for them – a bottle of wine – and presented it to her. Delighted, she removed the wrapping on the bottle before me, exclaiming that it is American practice to unwrap a gift in the presence of the giver. She then instructed Seung-ri (in Korean) to clear the coffee table for refreshments. Shortly afterwards, she brought a plate of rhubarb danishes which she disclosed she had purchased from an Amish baker at the farmer's market that morning. The volume of *The Simpsons* episode on television which had been on in the background was then muted.

(Field notes, November 15, 2005)

Particularly noteworthy is how Joanne was quick to position herself as someone who had knowledge of American culture. This was illustrated by her proclamation of the importance of unwrapping my gift before me, and subsequently performing the actual unwrapping. One may read this as an attempt on her part to be "culturally intelligible" (Butler, 1990). By engaging in self-positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), she deliberately positioned herself as someone who was conversant with American culture. This was further demonstrated by fact that *The Simpsons* was on television when I arrived, and remained on (its volume muted) throughout the stretch of my visit. Equally telling was her choice of refreshments – rhubarb danishes by

an Amish baker – as if to underline to me that she knew how to participate in the Mid-Western American culture of patronizing farmer's markets and consuming products sold there. Joanne's enactment of mainstream American culture through her actions underscores Block's (2007) astute observation that positionings involve "not only the use of language but also other forms of semiotic activity such as dress and body movement" (p.18). After all, Joanne's choice of pastries can be interpreted as a semiotics of food consumption, an enactment of embodied capital which is reminiscent of that practiced by the French petit-bourgeois as a mark of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984).

However, it would be misleading to argue that Joanne was an absolute American cultural convert as she also exercised elements of individual agency which aligned her with Korean culture. After all, she spoke to Seung-ri in Korean in my presence, and reminded me of the need to take my shoes off before entering a Korean household. Indeed, that she moved fluidly across a set of hybridized practices is not uncommon among cosmopolitans. Luke (2001, p.41), for instance, points out that Asian international students are unlikely to take up Western knowledge uncritically and buy into the "West is best" model. Similarly, other scholars (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Ramanathan, 2005c) have argued that from a pedagogical perspective, hybrid practices are possible because of the indigenization of global Western culture. Significantly, because Joanne was able to slide quite effortlessly between different cultural worlds, she exemplified the persona of a "shape-shifting portfolio person" (Gee, Hull, & Lanskhear, 1996), that is, one who possesses marketable skills in the new capitalist economy, a characteristic often associated with cosmopolitans.

Joanne's ability to mobilize her resources was, however, not restricted to the realm of cultural practices as it was also borne out on a linguistic level. This is illustrated in the following interview excerpt where she positions herself to understand me as well as to be understood.

3	P:	What do Koreans think about people who speak English? Or in Korea, what do the Korean people think about other people who
4	J:	speak English?
5	P:	Ah, there's some confusion. Okay, let's see. Like when you're in Korea, and if you can speak
6	J:	English, what do people think of you? Oh, I understand. If I can speak English very well, people think "Oh you can take up good job." Yes, English is so important in Korea.

(Interview 1, September 15, 2005)

My question about what Koreans think of people who speak English had drawn a blank response earlier. In view of that, I repeated it and then

rephrased the question (Turn 3). However, Joanne still did not fully understand the question and verbalized her confusion in her comment, "Ah, there's some confusion" (Turn 4). This utterance – a request for clarification and act of strategic positioning (Harré and van Langenhove , 1999) – was a clever attempt to have me simplify my question. She positioned herself as someone who was confused, and by doing so, indirectly implicated me in this web of confusion that had apparently been created. The utterance proved successful as this was a strong cue for me to paraphrase my question. This then prompted me to scaffold her understanding through my revised question: "Ok, let's see. Like when you're in Korea, and if you can speak English, what do people think of you?" (Turn 5). This time, Joanne comprehended the question and was able to respond to it. Perhaps even more significant in this exchange was her ability to negotiate meaning through interaction. Through voicing her misunderstanding (instead of remaining silent, or pretending to understand the question posed to her), Joanne was able to initiate and coordinate a collaborative conversational act which kept both of us in sync with one another.

Importantly, Joanne's ability to deploy her linguistic as well as her cultural capital was also demonstrated in class. Joanne was enrolled in an intermediate-level intensive ESL class, English 110. Her daily lessons were divided according to the skill areas of reading, writing, grammar and oral communication. Each skill area was taught by a different instructor. The classroom interaction excerpt I present shortly was part of her grammar class which was by taught Elaine, an Anglo woman with 21 years of ESL experience. In this excerpt, Elaine (E) is seen asking Joanne (J) and her classmate Victoria (V) about their experience with lasik surgery, a cosmetic operating procedure that is available only to those who can afford it.

1	E:	Now, who had lasik surgery? (*Victoria and Joanne raise their hands*). Interesting, huh, so you had lasik surgery (*points to Victoria*) and you had lasik surgery (*points to Joanne*). And it
2	V:	took just 5 minutes?
3	E:	Yeah.
4	V:	Did it hurt?
5	J:	No.
		We just hear, just hear a noise (*circles her forefinger around*
6	E:	*her right ear*) like "whrrrr".
7	V:	And you didn't feel anything?
8	E:	No. They use computer.
9	V:	Did you do both eyes? When they finished did they cover your
10	E:	eyes?
11	V:	Yes, covered.
12	E:	Did they cover both eyes?
13	J:	No one eye.
		So did you do one eye on one day and another eye another day?

No, both eyes same day. Just 5 minutes.

(English 110, October 5, 2005)

At first glance, it appears that the teacher, Elaine, wields much power as it is she who is asking the questions. However, what is interesting to note is how between the two of them, Victoria and Joanne are able to hold their own as they reinforce each other as they respond to Elaine's questions. We see a co-construction of knowledge as well as scaffolding taking place as Elaine shares the speaking floor with these two female students. In asking these questions, Elaine also learns about the process involved in lasik surgery. Put simply, Elaine ratifies Joanne's capital who is positioned as someone who has information that is valuable and relevant to the ongoing conversation. Crucially, Joanne uses such a ratification to facilitate further discussion in order to enhance her own language development. In short, occasions like these illustrate how Joanne was able to advance her learning of English.

CAPITAL MISRECOGNITION

In the preceding section, we saw how through acts of skilful linguistic and cultural engineering, Joanne was able to successfully capitalize the resources available to her as a cosmopolitan in order to advance her learning of English. In other words, by positioning herself strategically, Joanne was able to achieve some degree of success in transforming her habitus into that of a successful ESL learner. However, we also need to take into consideration Hawkins's (2004) observation that while interactants may make bids for identities, not all identities are equally available to everyone in an interaction. After all, power is a social construction and because of this, we ought to heed Peirce's (1995) exhortation to explore "how inequitable relations of power limits the opportunities L2 learners have to practice the target language outside the classroom" (p.12).

In spite of her somewhat privileged status, Joanne did find herself in situations where her capital was not legitimized. In my company, and given my background as an ESL instructor and a fellow international student who empathized with her situation, Joanne's capital was recognized. However, in other instances, such capital recognition was not available to her. This in turn negatively influenced her language learning experience. That differing capital valuations often occur in a world characterized by globalized flows is underlined by Blommaert (2005) who notes:

> Whenever discourses travel across the globe, what is carried with them is their shape, but their value, meaning, or function do not often travel along. Value, meaning, and function are a matter of uptake, they have to be granted by others on the basis of the prevailing orders

of indexicality, and increasingly also on the basis of their real or potential 'market value' as a cultural commodity. (p.72)

Echoing a similar sentiment, Luke (2009) has argued that education inevitably hinges on the politics of recognition as "human subjects in authority assign distinction and, through pedagogy, curriculum and evaluation, set out conditions for the transformation of capital into value" (p. 288). Such a reality which occurs in the language classroom and beyond its walls was experienced first-hand by Joanne.

Community contact

During an interview, Joanne disclosed that she only turned to older American men and women when she needed assistance outside of class. This practice resulted from a bad experience she had with a young Anglo American woman who was rude and impatient with her when she approached her for help. Joanne's failed bid to assume an identity of equal status with this Anglo American speaker left a negative impact on her, thereby underscoring how inequitable relations of power as mediated through racialized positionings (Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009) may limit the opportunities L2 learners have to practice the target language outside the classroom. Her experience with native English speakers invites comparison to that of Carlos, the Spanish-speaking philosophy professor from Colombia who ended up working as a porter in London (Block, 2006, 2007). Like Carlos, Joanne found herself in some ways declassed, despite the considerable economic, social, and cultural capital she had. She shared how she once had much difficulty trying to explain what she wanted to a grocer at the supermarket, and ultimately had to call Seung-ri on the mobile phone and ask him to speak directly to the grocer. In having to depend on Seung-ri as an interpreter, Joanne found her agency further curtailed.

Not surprisingly, unpleasant experiences like these had a marginalizing effect on Joanne, and one way she responded to them was by remaining within a primarily Korean circle of friends outside the classroom. Like Carlos in Block's (2006, 2007) research, Joanne engaged in a form of cultural and linguistic maintenance by keeping within a transnational community of university-educated Korean speakers. After all, she belonged to a tightly knit Korean community. She also attended a Korean church together with Seung-ri. This was revealed during the following exchange:

15	P:	Besides church, are there any other groups or people you mix
16	J:	with?
17	P:	No, not yet.
18	J:	Are your church friends Korean?
19	P:	Yeah, yeah.
20	J:	Are there people of other nationalities at church? Or are they just Korean?

Just Korean. I go to Korean church. Church is not Korean, Korean people use that church. I heard morning, Sunday morning, American people use that church and afternoon, Korean people use that church.

(Interview 2, October 20, 2005)

That Joanne maintained a strong sense of fellowship with the other Koreans was evidenced by her place of residence. Both she and Seung-ri lived in a residential complex which housed a large number of Korean graduate students and their families. Given the close bond within the Korean community, Joanne hardly seemed motivated to interact with her neighbours of different nationalities. This was revealed during the interview:

| 32 | P: | Do you mix with these international students? Do you talk to |
| 33 | J: | them? |

We all busy. Sometimes we meet laundry, laundry room. We talk about "hello", "how are you", that's all.

(Interview 2, October 20, 2005)

As the above data suggest, Joanne's contact with international students who were not Korean was limited. This was primarily because most of her interactions were with fellow Korean graduate students. This became evident to me during my home visit. I had started chatting with Seung-ri and Joanne when an adult Korean male, a neighbour of theirs, came over to return a wrench he had borrowed. After he left, Joanne informed me that the man was a close friend and that they often socialized with him and his wife (Field notes, November 15, 2005). In short, social class, nationality, race, and language seemed to be pivotal factors in deciding whom she associated with as her "community" comprised university-educated Koreans who like Seung-ri and herself seemed to embody the essence of cosmopolitanism. However, such a closed community, rather than contributing to her English language development, impeded it to some extent. This sense of enclosure within the Korean community extended to the classroom where seven out of the nine students in her class (the other two came from Hong Kong and Syria) were Korean. That such a class composition affected her language development was evidenced by Joanne's own acknowledgement:

| 46 | J: | Yeah, but, a lot of Korean students in classroom so sometimes not so good because tend to talk in Korean … |

(Interview 1, September 15, 2005)

As large an impact that enclosure within her Korean community may have had on her learning trajectory, it only represents part of a more complex picture. To better understand the other micropolitical processes that shaped her learning, I return to Joanne's ESL classroom.

The ESL classroom

Much has been written about the politics of the ESL classroom over the last two decades since Pennycook's (1989) call to interrogate how English is taught in the ESL classroom. More recently, Canagarajah (2008) has exclaimed that, "No sensible professional can practice ELT today without being alert to the … the values behind methods and materials, and unequal classroom relationships and roles" (p.213). Joanne's English 110 classroom was not impervious to these inequalities. As we saw briefly earlier, Joanne was enrolled in Elaine's grammar class. The focus of the lesson I present shortly was the past perfect tense which had been introduced the day before. Like in many other lessons, Elaine gave out a worksheet and told them to work in groups. The activity is reflected below:

STEP 1: Read the statements below and try to match each statement to people in your class. Write the name in the column marked *Guesses.*

STEP 2: Next, ask your classmates questions using How long have you … ? in order to find out who has done each thing the longest and shortest amounts of time. Fill in the answers in the column marked *Facts*.

GUESSES	WHO …	FACTS
_____	has had the shoes she or he is wearing today the longest time?	_____
—	has worn the glasses the longest time?	–
_____	has worn glasses the shortest time?	_____
—	has had the same hair style the longest time?	–
_____	has smoked the longest time?	_____
—		–
_____		_____
—		–
_____		_____
—		–

In the conversational excerpt which follows, we see how as the teacher, Elaine has the symbolic power to define what kinds of identities are valued and the types of capital that are recognized. This is particularly pronounced when we use positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) to analyze the voices of the different participants who comprised Joanne (J), Victoria (V), Dan (D), and Elaine (E).

16	V:	How long have been wear glasses?
17	J:	Three years.
18	V:	Three years?
19	J:	Uh hmm. (*Dan comes behind the two women and they discuss their answers.*)
20	V:	How long … no. How long have you been this hairstyle?
21	D:	Two months.
22	J:	Two months? (*writes down Dan's answer*)
23	E:	(*joins the group of three*) Which one (*Joanne points to the question of the worksheet*)?
24	V:	How long have you own these shoes?
25	E:	(*interjects*) Be careful. How long (*looks to Victoria, starts waving her forefinger and says slowly*) have you owned these
26	V:	shoes?
27	E:	Have you owned these shoes?
28	V:	Right. (*addressing Dan with Joanne sitting in the middle*) How long
29	J:	have you been wearing glasses?
30	V:	(*copies Dan's response*) How long have you had this same hair style?

(English 110, October 7, 2005)

An interesting dynamic is being played out in the above excerpt. There appears to be a pecking order in terms of power. Among the three students – Dan, Joanne and Victoria – Victoria seems to be the one posing most of the questions, and therefore holds the most power. By contrast, Joanne is the one being interrogated and when Dan arrives to join them, she continues to take the back seat and allows Victoria to continue asking her questions. Joanne is reduced to being a note taker (turns 22 and 29), while Dan's speaking role (turn 21) is restricted to his response to Victoria's question. The power dynamics change, however, when Elaine joins the group as her involvement intensifies the power differential. This differential becomes evident when Elaine interrupts Victoria (turn 25), even before the latter can finish formulating her questions. Admittedly, Elaine's intentions are good as she affirms Victoria's response by acknowledging "Right" (turn 27), in a gesture to encourage her. However, we also see Elaine's strong teacher surveillance being enacted. In light of this, Victoria's autonomy is restricted and her opportunity to interact with her peers also curtailed due to Elaine's interruptions. Victoria's position undergoes a deflation as she moves from being a person in charge of the discussion group to one who has to take her cue from Elaine.

Arguably, this also impacts Joanne's positioning and, hence, her opportunities to speak. With Elaine entering the scene, there seems to be a

competition for the floor, and given the pecking order discussed earlier, Joanne appears to be relegated within the speaking hierarchy. Second, Elaine's intervention may have scared Joanne off from speaking more in this context. Having seen Victoria, a more competent speaker interrupted, Joanne may then have decided to say less lest she also be interrupted and corrected by Elaine. Consequently, Joanne is rendered inaudible (Miller, 2003) as she is positioned as a note taker. By doing so and not contributing to the conversation, Joanne assumes first order positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) as she accepts Elaine's positioning without challenging it.

On review, despite her best intentions and a prior education which afforded her some cultural capital to facilitate her learning of English, Joanne found that the capital she had did not necessarily translate into positive learning outcomes as there were occasions when her capital was misrecognized. This in turn triggered a retreat into her social circle which, while comfortable and safe, also had a retarding effect on her language learning development. Hence, as a consequence of social forces beyond her control and her own actions, Joanne ended up being cast to the fringes of American society. In many ways, her assumption of the identity of an avid fan of films was representative of her status in society – a vicarious participant of American culture and a peripheral English language learner who achieved greater success in the realm of her imagination than in reality.

IMPLICATIONS

> We are functioning in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion. These objects includes ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques. This is a world of flows. (Appadurai, 2001, p.5)

In this world of flows which Appadurai writes about, learners such as Joanne who move fluidly across physical borders are growing at an unprecedented rate. Their fluid movement has spurred Kenway and Bullen (2005) to refer to them as "cosmopolitan citizens" as many appear to be equipped with the cultural capital to help them transverse these borders. However, such capital needs to be validated by the cultural gatekeepers before membership into an imagined cosmopolitan community can be authorized. As we have seen in Joanne's case, such an authorization is contingent on whether the identities she engages are ratified or not. In other words, identity work and learning are inextricably tied with the politics of recognition. Given these stark realities, applied linguists need to include in their research agenda the lived histories and sociolinguistic realities of the people they study. This entails a careful consideration of the investments learners bring to the learning enterprise, and of course, a follow-through on how and if these investments are realized. Such an agenda is probably best articulated by Heller (2007) who has called for linguists to consider

[t]he various forms and practices themselves, that is, the observable ways in which people draw on linguistic resources in situ, and how this connects to the circulation of resources over *time and space*, as well as to the circulation of people through activities where resources and discourses are produced and distributed. (p.341, italics added)

The need to examine how these resources are deployed over space and time by way of conducting longitudinal studies is especially relevant and magnified when we study the language dynamics of cosmopolitan learners like Joanne who move between different worlds and embrace hybridity as part of their lived realities. One way to partake in such an examination, as illustrated in this article, is to use the heuristic of positioning to analyze how different resources are drawn upon in different contexts as it contributes towards a deeper understanding of the political intricacies that characterize language learning.

For practitioners, the findings of this study serve as a reminder of the hyphenated identities many learners in the ESL classroom inhabit. As a Korean-female-wife-student- -Christian, Joanne views the world from the nexus of her differentiated identities. However, she is not an exception. Rather, she is part of a growing number of learners who reside in cultural borderlands. To accommodate their needs, scholars such as Luke (2004) have called for a re-envisioning of teachers and teaching to engage in "cosmopolitan work". Such work ultimately requires teachers to recognize the different resources that diverse learners bring to the classroom. This can done, for example, by having them talk about the practices from their own cultures or discussing topics that are salient to their everyday lives. As this study demonstrates, we should not be too quick to assume that learners like Joanne, who appear to have the necessary cultural because of their "privileged" backgrounds, will cruise through the educational system. That she had to wrestle with issues of misrecognized capital (i.e., a situation where her resources were not ratified by those with whom she came into contact) is an appropriate reminder that even while certain societal forces may be beyond our control, teachers continue to yield considerable power in the classroom. At the end of the day, the proverbial ball rests in our court as we keep in mind Edge's (2006) observation:

For whatever else we represent and unwittingly teach along with English [or any other language], it may be that *how we are* as teachers and as people remains crucial to the way we are perceived and located by others, and this remains to a large extent in our own hands (p.116)

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