

“Jackie Chan drinks Mountain Dew: Constructing Cultural Models of Citizenship”¹

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Introduction

In a U. S. high school civics class, one that is “sheltered” to accommodate the needs of the English language learners, the teacher, his Hmong/Lao-translating aide, and the nonnative English-speaking students frequently invoke such popular culture icons as McDonalds, Michael Jordan, and Jackie Chan in their interactions concerning the principles and contents of the American Constitution and other matters of life for citizens of the U.S. A *communication strategies* framework would explain the invoking of such popular culture icons, especially by the teacher and his aide, as their strategic efforts, through “exemplification” and “clarification,” to ensure mutual comprehension of the civics concepts and rights and duties of citizenship. (See Dörnyei and Scott, 1997, for a recent review of the communication strategies literature.) However, while a communication strategies orientation could provide a pragmatic or functional description of popular culture in the classroom discourse, such an orientation does not problematize its presence in the discourse. What specific meanings are constructed, in the classroom, about popular culture and through its inclusion in the discourse? How do students position themselves, and how are they positioned by teachers, in relationship to popular culture? What identities and values are accepted or contested? What knowledge—implicit or explicit—is ratified as a result? And, especially when classrooms are culturally and linguistically diverse (as they are, increasingly, in North America), we must ask whether,

and when, the invoking of popular culture may be comprehensible and accessible to some students, but not to all.

By drawing on more critical perspectives on classrooms and discourse (e.g., Gee, 1996; 1999; Giroux, 1994; Giroux and Simon, 1989; Pennycook, 1994; 2001), this study addresses some of these questions in examining popular culture examples in the discourse of the teacher, aide, and students in a high school sheltered civics class. Following Gee (1999) in particular, we ask what kinds of *cultural models* are being constructed jointly by participants as they invoke popular culture in considering such concepts as “propaganda,” “endorsement,” “bandwagon,” and “impulse buyer.” That is, as Gee asks, whose cultural models are validated, what beliefs and values are inherent to them, and in such a diverse class as this, are there competing or hybrid cultural models in the English/Hmong/Lao discourse? This study will consider such questions in focusing in particular on the teacher’s and his Hmong/Lao aide’s use of popular culture examples and the implications for our understanding of students’ communities and identities as well as for their learning and access to learning.

Popular Culture in Theory and Research on Classrooms

There is a need for research on popular culture in classroom discourse, and this can be argued across the universe of classrooms. The semiotician Marcel Danesi (1999; 2000), describing how culture is built on metaphor, has recently (2002) emphasized how popular culture has become, for teenagers, a major source for their metaphors (and thus, for the cultural models they co-construct). Taking a similar view, although addressing international English language classrooms in particular, and from a critical rather than semiotic perspective, Pennycook (1994:312-13) argues for a change toward a critical

English pedagogy which would address “the connections between English and popular culture, development, capitalism, dependency, and so on.” This is in recognition that in many settings around the world, students’ engagement with English more often involves TV, video, films, and music than the traditional written texts of the TOEFL² curricula. From their critical standpoint, Freire and Giroux (1989; also Giroux, 1994) argue for a critical pedagogy directed toward building a democratic society, one in which participants are “exercising civic courage, taking risks, and furthering the habits, customs, and social relations essential to democratic public forms” (pp. viii-ix). Such a pedagogy needs to include “aspects of popular culture as a serious educational discourse into the school curriculum,” requiring that educators “steep [themselves]... in the language of the everyday, the discourses of the communities that our students are produced within, and ...engage difference as part of the broader discourse of justice, equality, and community” (pp. ix-x). However important a presence it may have, popular culture has not been much attended to by radical theorists of education (Giroux and Simon, 1989)—or, more broadly, within educational theory. This is due, according to Giroux and Simon (1989), to two different opinions about popular culture held by radical theorists (one of which overlaps with conservative beliefs). Briefly, one of two contrasting opinions about popular culture as held by the left is that it is inauthentic, uncreative, and that the elites impose it on the masses, who have no ability to resist. Ironically, Giroux and Simon (1989) argue, this view overlaps with the conservative view in that they both acknowledge an “elite” or “high” culture against which the vulgar, mass culture is contrasted. Implications of this for pedagogy are similar, whether they come from the right or the left: it is a “transmission pedagogy consistent with a view of culture

as an artifact and students as merely bearers of received knowledge” (Giroux and Simon, 1989: 7). The other view of popular culture held by the left is one which romanticizes it as folk culture, an idealizing of the working class as authentic. Giroux and Simon urge the adoption of a more complex notion of popular culture, based on Gramsci, which directs itself against the kind of essentializing of popular culture inherent to conventional views, and which considers popular culture, instead, to be a “set of practices” and a “discursive field” which has forms that are complex and mutable, in which people have differing and changing amounts of investment (Giroux and Simon, 1989: 9). An individual’s investment can be conflictual; a recent *New York Times* article addressed this in a piece informatively titled “Damning (Yet Desiring) Mickey and the Big Mac.” (Giroux’s [1994] title, *Disturbing Pleasures*, captures the conflict as well.) Moreover, differing notions of popular culture (vis-à-vis “high” culture, if one acknowledges that) have relevance far beyond discussions of critical pedagogy per se, and explain, in part, the positioning taken and identities constructed as teachers and students engage in discourse that is permeated by popular culture.

Though there is literature such as the above which addresses theories of popular culture and argues for its inclusion in a critical, reflective pedagogy, there is not, to date, much research examining popular culture as constructed through classroom discourse. What there is, largely considers native-English-speaking classes, with the most notable work probably that of Dyson (1997), who in her study of the writing of second graders, examined how the children drew on superhero characters from TV to build their identities and points of connection to others. Virtually the only work which focuses on popular culture in classes that are linguistically and culturally heterogeneous is the recent research

by Duff (2001; 2002), who examined the discourse in mainstream social studies classes in a Canadian high school. Duff reported that the teacher's use of specific TV programs to make points appeared to engage the "local" (i.e., native-English-speaking) students in the class, but not the ESL students, who remained largely silent and nonparticipatory. By surveying them, Duff ascertained that the ESL students did not experience the same media—newspapers, TV, radio—as did the local students (and, apparently, their teacher), leading Duff to refer to "different pop culture worlds." The concern she raised was that though popular culture references engaged (at least some of) the local students, it was questionable whether for the ESL students, the popular culture referents gave them access to the knowledge that was being constructed in the classroom. As Duff (2002: 9) concludes, we cannot assume that we share the "sociocultural and psycholinguistic repertoires" that are needed at any given time in the classroom. This is a concern in any classroom as we bring students together from their individual families and backgrounds. However, it is a special challenge to co-construct discourse that is comprehensible and accessible to students when we have such rich language and cultural diversity in our classes. One of Duff's concluding suggestions, toward giving the ESL students (and potential others) greater access to popular-culture-infused discourse, is to do a kind of popular culture awareness-raising with the class as a means of encouraging students to articulate and share with others the popular culture practices in which they are most invested.

The Current Study

The current study addresses the need for more research on popular culture in the discourse of linguistically and culturally heterogeneous classes, and like Duff's research

(2001; 2002), examines a high school social studies class. However, while Duff's research is on mainstream classes comprised of both native English speaking and ESL students, the study to be reported here looks at discourse in a sheltered civics class. As such, all of the students in the class are somewhere on a continuum of English-learning, and the teacher is assisted by an aide who translates into Hmong and Lao, the dominant languages of the majority of the students in the class. The study joins the perspectives on popular culture taken by Pennycook (1994; 2000), Giroux (1994), and Giroux and Simon (1989) in considering popular culture as it is used by the teacher, his aide, and the students, as they interact in English, Hmong, and Lao, in several sessions of the civics class. As a framing principle for analyzing the data, Gee (1996; 1999) and Gee and Green's (1998) notion of *cultural model* will be used. Cultural models are "tapes of experiences we have had, seen, read about, or imagined" (Gee, 1999: 60), which can be conflicting and incomplete—for individuals themselves as well as in comparison with others—and contain those beliefs and values that have been normalized. Directed specifically to instances of popular culture in the discourse, we will address the following questions: What kinds of cultural models are being jointly constructed³ by the teacher, aide, and students as they consider such concepts as "propaganda," "endorsement," and "impulse buying"? Which cultural models are validated, and which are resisted or ignored? What beliefs and values are inherent to a model, and are there competing or hybridized models that emerge?

Background to the Current Study

The data for this paper come from a larger project⁴, a five-year, longitudinal, microethnography of classroom language socialization in a culturally and linguistically

diverse high school in a midwest U.S. urban area which we call “Center City.”⁵ Jefferson High School lies in an economically-challenged area of the city that was previously an Eastern European community and is now populated largely by Hispanic, Lao, and Hmong residents. Enrollment figures for Jefferson High at the time of the study revealed that of its 1400 students, 60% were Hispanic, 20% were African-American, 10% were White, 8% Asian, and 2% Native American. These percentages are quite different from the overall statistics for the district, but common to both Jefferson High school and the district-wide enrollment is the relatively high number of “minorities” and the high degree of poverty. Over 75% of the students at the school qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program and between 76% and 99% of the students live in single-parent families (School Context Form, December 5, 1996).

Our research team visited Jefferson High twice-weekly from the fall of 1996 to June of 2000. The project data include science and social studies classroom videotapes and observational notes, student questionnaires, teacher and teacher aide interviews, and regular, small group interviews with students. (Some of the other analyses which have drawn on project data are listed in the references list and include Cole and Zuengler, 2003; Hellermann, Cole, and Zuengler, 2001; and Zuengler, Ford, and Fassnacht, 1998.)

The study reported here focuses on a subset of data from a year-long civics class taught by Mr. Agnew. Mr. Agnew’s Civics class was a sheltered class for the LEP (“Limited English Proficient”) students whom the school referred to as the “Asian” students. Though there was a Spanish-English bilingual program at the school, there was no bilingual curriculum for speakers of Hmong, Lao, or Thai, the languages spoken by the majority of the Asian students at Jefferson High. Of the twenty-four students in the

civics class during the spring (the semester we focus on here), the overwhelming majority, seventeen, were Hmong, a distinctive ethnic and language group from the interior of Laos. Additionally, there were three students who were ethnically and linguistically Lao, as opposed to Hmong. There were as well four fully bilingual Spanish-speaking students. The mothers of three were Puerto Rican teacher colleagues of Mr. Agnew's and liked what they considered his more serious teaching style and classroom management skills, so they arranged with him to have their children placed in his class. The fourth Spanish speaker, of Mexican background, was taking the class because this was her last semester before graduating and this particular class session fit into her tight schedule. As one might imagine, English proficiency in the civics class was quite varied, ranging from the very limited proficiency of at least half of the Hmong students who had been in the U.S. less than two years to the native speaker-like proficiency of the four bilingual Spanish speakers. According to Mr. Agnew, most of the students in this class—that is, the Hmong and Lao students, had permanent resident or refugee status rather than U.S. citizenship, and were planning to stay in this country. Mr. Agnew, a native of Center City in his 40s, spoke a little Spanish but not Hmong or Lao. To help the Hmong and Lao students, there were two Hmong aides, each in their 30s, Mr. Tong, who worked with a wide variety of students because he knew Hmong, Lao, and some Thai, and Ms. Li, who worked with the low-proficiency Hmong students. We learned that the female low-proficiency students in particular had a cultural preference to working with another female, and so directed their needs to Ms. Li. (Most of the Hmong female students in the class, whether with high or low English proficiency, were married and had children.) Due to differences in their English proficiency, Mr. Agnew divided the

Hmong students into two sections in the class; the two rows away from the door were the lowest-English-proficiency students (all of whom were Hmong) who worked with Ms. Li, while the two rows near the door were higher in proficiency and were addressed in English by Mr. Agnew. Interspersing Mr. Agnew's teaching were Hmong and Lao translations by Mr. Tong. Having worked with Mr. Agnew for a number of years, Mr. Tong had been given more responsibility than Ms. Li, who joined the class more recently, and so it was usually Mr. Tong to whom Mr. Agnew turned for translation of what he had just been teaching in English. Ms. Li often worked one-on-one with "her" students, rather than addressing a group of them at once. Meanwhile, the three Lao speakers worked with each other and with Mr. Tong. There was a certain amount of peer teaching among them, as one of them had high English proficiency. The four Spanish speakers, fluent in English, were dispersed around the room to prevent them from talking to each other.

Both Mr. Tong and Ms. Li had been in the U.S. since they were adolescents and were very fluent in English; Ms. Li had a degree in English from a university in Center City, and Mr. Tong was finishing his from another Midwestern university. Mr. Tong had acquired Lao through his marriage to his ethnic Lao wife. Regarding the language repertoires of the students, there was some acquisition of each other's languages, particularly of Lao by Hmong students. Though Hmong and Lao are not mutually intelligible, some of the Hmong students understood Lao as a result of their time in refugee camps in Thailand, where some of them also began learning English. It is much less common, according to interviews with Mr. Tong and Ms. Li, for Lao speakers to know Hmong, due largely to the fact that Lao was ethnically and culturally superordinate

in Laos (the dynamics of which continued in their settlement in the U.S.). Because she too was in a refugee camp, one of the three Lao students in the class had acquired some Hmong; however, she sat with and communicated almost always with her Lao peers in the class. In addition to language variation, there was variation in grade level. Because students' schedules differed according to how mainstreamed they were, whether they were still taking ESL, etc., the civics class had students who ranged from freshmen to seniors.

The civics class lessons were organized around the textbook on the U.S. constitution that was required reading. The common instructional sequence was for Mr. Agnew to explain several of the textbook concepts—"order of inheritance," "eminent domain," "search warrant," etc.—which were the focus of the particular chapter the students were supposed to have read and studied. After a few minutes, he would turn it over to Mr. Tong, who would start translating either in Hmong, to the larger group, or Lao, to the group of three. He would signal to Mr. Agnew in English when he was finished and often mentioned to him that he had added examples or concentrated in particular on one of the concepts that did not have an equivalent in Hmong or Lao. Meanwhile, Ms. Li would work with the lower-level Hmong students, speaking softly while Mr. Agnew was teaching and picking up after Mr. Tong had ended his translation. While Mr. Tong was speaking Hmong, one usually heard the Lao students speaking to each other (supposedly but not always engaged in peer teaching), and Mr. Agnew would answer questions asked him in English by any of the students. Once Mr. Tong switched to Lao, some of the Hmong students would attend to what he was saying, while others worked on their own or spoke with Ms. Li. It was common in this class, then, for there to

be three sets of interactions going on simultaneously, in three different languages. Some of the students would use this time to chat with each other, and so periodically, the aides and Mr. Agnew would “shush” them and try to get them to pay attention.

This teacher-fronted classroom, with teacher and aides delivering much of the information to the students, who listen and write in their notebooks, occasionally responding—in Hmong, Lao, or English—with questions or comments for the teacher or aides, might be characterized as a “banking” or transmission model of education. This type of model is one which the education literature, including the teaching of English as a second language (e.g., Brown, 1987; Celce-Murcia, 1985; Larsen-Freeman, 1986), has, since at least the 1980s, opposed, directing us instead toward a student-centered learning model with more active student participation. However, it is both premature and simplistic to conclude that the instructional mode in the civics class might present an obstacle to students’ learning. For one thing, while the current study relates to questions of learning, it does not assess the general instructional mode. For another, we know that beliefs about learning vary across cultures. Some of the research, for example, which has examined Hmong adult learners’ preferences for and expectations of education in the U.S. has found beliefs expressed that conflict with certain current Western beliefs about teaching and learning. For example, the Hmong adults surveyed in Duffy (1994) indicated that teachers should be authority figures and expressed specific opinions such as the need for there to be a careful, predictable sequence of instruction, with the teacher going chapter to chapter fully through a textbook, rather than skipping around and ignoring some sections. Such views are similar to those reported by Hvitfeldt (1986) in a previous study of Hmong adult preferences for learning.

Many of the Hmong students in Mr. Agnew's class were often quiet. Describing the Hmong high school students in his study as having a "taciturn style," Findlay (1995) suggests that U.S. educators might tend to misinterpret them by thinking they are shy. Findlay argues that the students are in fact displaying respect for authority, namely, the teacher. "Hmong students are socialized in a way that dictates constant deference to authority; these forms of respect should be demonstrated through quiet, reserved behavior" (Findlay, 1995: 29). And, there are other reasons, also related to their background, which may explain why the Hmong students were quiet in Mr. Agnew's class. At least one of the Hmong students was reported by Mr. Tong to have told him that he did not wish to speak in class or raise or answer questions unless he was completely stuck and could not figure it out for himself. He told Mr. Tong that this was the way he had learned English, by himself, from a textbook, while he was in the refugee camp, and the student felt that this was the way he would continue learning.

Popular Culture in the Classroom Talk

Beginning shortly after our two-person research team⁶ started visiting Mr. Agnew's class twice a week, we noticed both Mr. Agnew and Mr. Tong drawing on popular culture in their teaching of civics concepts. Though neither of us understood Hmong or Lao, we began to hear quite regularly in Mr. Tong's translations, "McDonalds," "Michael Jordan," "Nike," etc. These popular culture items may or may not have come up in the teaching of Mr. Agnew which preceded the translation. Sometimes, it appeared that Mr. Agnew used different popular culture references than did Mr. Tong. Often, Mr. Tong, in turning the teaching back over to Mr. Agnew, would

explain some of the examples he had used, adding on in some cases to Mr. Agnew's examples. When we had the Hmong and Lao translated into English, we were able to study the popular culture examples within their context of use and undertake the analysis of the excerpts which follow.⁷ Studying the discourse in the civics class over the year of our study, we found that popular culture—in metaphor, as main topic, and as examples of civics concepts—was regularly interwoven into both the teacher and aides' "official curriculum" discourse as well as the students' side remarks (frequently considered "counterscripts" by teachers—see Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda [1999]). The five discourse excerpts which follow, taken from several class periods in the spring, illustrate popular culture use which we observed over the entire year in the class. Because it was common for a popular culture example to occur through long stretches of discourse, or to occur at one point and then reappear later in the hour, we include some excerpts from the same class period in order to display their context of use. The transcription conventions that were used are listed in the Appendix.

Four of the five discourse excerpts we focus on are from a class session early in the spring semester, when the students were about halfway through the chapters in their civics text. Mr. Agnew had begun the class by announcing that the chapter focus was how to get involved in the political system, leading to a long exchange about public opinion and the Clinton affair, during which a number of students offered their opinions. Some time later, Mr. Agnew drew their attention to the term "propaganda," presented in the text as "concealed propaganda" and "revealed propaganda." Mr. Agnew defined them as hidden, in the one case, and out in the open, in the other, and provided a couple examples, including a reference to commercials (though not mentioning specific ones).

Turning it over to Mr. Tong, Mr. Agnew told him to “go through that (then) I’m going to go through different commercials.” Prior to the excerpt below, Mr. Tong spent several minutes explaining in Hmong “concealed” and “revealed propaganda.” He continues:

Excerpt 1 (2S025AGNEW, 1/28/98)f: “revealed propaganda,” “endorsement”

(Italics = Hmong)

1 Mr T: ((continuing))*The bottom one is that they open wide for*
 2 *everyone to see. For example if I going to running for*
 3 *president I let you guy know that what is my purpose, my*
 4 *words, my speech I going to give to you guy, how I going to*
 5 *help you guy. I again going to mention about TV,*
 6 *commercial. They pay some one who are very good at sports*
 7 *like Michael Jordan right, why do they use it like that?*
 8 *Because he play basketball very good right, if his image is*
 9 *out on basketball, one shirt or a shoes they will, those*
 10 *young men that like it a lot then it doesn't matter 100 or*
 11 *110 dollar they will buy it (.) right. Why do those*
 12 *McDonald use sport star to show on commercial? The reason*
 13 *why is that if I like that person and that person eat it*
 14 *then I would eat it too. So if Mr. Tong do a commercial*
 15 *then will you guy eat or buy French fries?*
 16 Mim: *(You, we won't eat it)*
 17 Mr T: Right, right, I give them a little more further. I said why
 18 it that, yeah, why is it that they use sport stars for
 19 commercial.
 20 Mr A: That's right where we're going [to go.
 21 Mr T: [If I go to commercial will
 22 anyone know (xx) to go buy French fries.
 23 Mr A: Alright. that's it. in fact, the first one, let's talk
 24 about it. say the word endorsement.
 25 SS: Endorsement.
 26 Mr A: Endorsement is just what Mr. Tong was explaining.
 27 endorsement is when they take a famous person and says you
 28 should buy what they use. here's an example of one in a
 29 magazine. it says drink Diet Coke. because Katerina Witt
 30 drinks Diet Coke, [she's a famous skater, and she's
 31 Fernando: [It's not Witt it's Vitt.
 32
 33 Mr A: in good shape and looks good. so the idea here is, you want
 34 to look like her? well drink Diet Coke.
 35 Fernando: (xxx) [(xxx)
 36 Mr A: [Right? so endorsement is a famous person as Mr. Tong
 37 said, and, it's either because they said so because they're
 38 famous, or,
 39 Mr A: you'll look like them. you'll look like them. right? all of
 40 you know Arnold Schwarzeneger?
 41 SS: Yeah.

42 Mr A: okay, so Arnold Schwarzeneger says use this machine and
 43 you'll get big and strong.
 44 Mr T: Like me. ((said off-camera; ss smile and several chuckle))
 45 Mr A: You're going to look like Arnold Schwarzeneger if you
 46 buy that machine, right? that's a famous person. you
 47 know, sometimes it has absolutely nothing to do with what
 48 the person knows.((continues))

As Mr. Tong is explaining “revealed propaganda,” he uses an example of himself running for the presidency (lines 2-4), with the students as hypothetical voters. Such “participant examples” (Wortham, 1994), which both Mr. Tong and Mr. Agnew made frequent use of, involve a narrated event, real or imagined, in which the teller and/or listeners participate. As such, the participants assume a character, or identity, and positioning within the event (Wortham, 1994), and convey (however implicitly, and whether playfully or not) a sense of the values and beliefs within the cultural models that are being constructed (Gee, 1996; 1999). However, Mr. Tong’s example remains brief (two lines of transcript) and general (e.g., as translated, “my words,” “my purpose,” “my speech,” etc.) compared to the much more elaborated and specific example he then goes into using television commercials (starting at line 5), mentioning Michael Jordan, basketball, a shirt or shoes for a hundred or a hundred ten dollars, etc. In fact, study of Mr. Tong’s examples (whether “participant examples” or not) over a number of class sessions during the year showed that often, Mr. Tong’s popular culture examples were relatively more elaborated and specific than examples from politics or government. Since Mr. Agnew had not, in his explanation, used examples from television commercials, this and other discourse examples show how Mr. Tong functioned as both co-teacher and translator, as he would often condense, elaborate, and add material of his own.

Continuing his orientation to sports celebrities, Mr. Tong then shifts, in line 11, to such people in McDonalds' commercials, moving to a new participant example as a means of explaining why this happens. In lines 13-14 Mr. Tong casts himself as the consumer who wants to imitate what his favorite star eats; seeing that the star eats at McDonalds, Mr. Tong will follow along. Building his point, Mr. Tong reframes the example: Mr. Tong as the promoter of McDonalds' French fries and the students as the consumers (lines 14-15); asking whether they would eat or buy the product, a normally-reticent student, Mim, replies on behalf of the "consumers" that they would not eat it if it were Mr. Tong in the ad. In the videotape, there is no appearance of discomfort in this exchange, and Mr. Tong and the students are smiling. It would seem that Mr. Tong's self-abasing strategy, constructing himself as a nobody, was received as playfully as it was intended. (And this reframing may enable the Hmong students to suspend the displays of respect to authority referred to earlier.)

Mr. Tong shifts into English (line 17) to pass the turn to Mr. Agnew and provides a little summary of what he did, telling him as well that he went "a little more further" than Mr. Agnew in his explanation. Mr. Agnew responds that he will take the same direction in focusing on commercials, and uses what Mr. Tong had just summarized to him to introduce a new civics term, "endorsement" (line 26). Giving students a brief definition of the term, Mr. Agnew brings up his own example (starting line 28), from a magazine which he holds up, featuring Katerina Witt endorsing Diet Coke. As such, his example of a sports celebrity selling a product parallels that of Mr. Tong. However, while Mr. Tong appeared to assume students' familiarity with his popular culture example (e.g., he did not say "McDonalds, a fast food restaurant"), Mr. Agnew does not

make such an assumption about Katarina Witt, adding “she’s a famous skater, and she’s in good shape and looks good” (lines 30, 33). His capsule description of the skater is stereotypically gendered; while one could argue that being in good shape is important for all athletes, “looks good” is less athletically-relevant and instead enforces the stereotype of women being judged on their appearance. While Mr. Agnew is speaking, one of the students, Fernando, interrupts him (line 31) to correct his pronunciation of “Witt,” pronouncing it with an initial “v” rather than “w” sound. In so doing, Fernando offers the conventional and German pronunciation of the German skater’s name, and does it with assurance (“It’s not Witt it’s Vitt”), displaying his familiarity with the skater but also indicating that his and Mr. Agnew’s knowledge of the skater might come through engagement with different texts. Fernando may have heard the name pronounced on TV, while Mr. Agnew, who often remarked that he did not watch much TV, probably encountered it largely through print sources like the magazine ad to which he was pointing.

A few turns later, Mr. Agnew again checks the students’ familiarity with a popular culture celebrity—Arnold Schwarzenegger⁸—receiving a chorus of “yeahs” from the students, before using him in another example of endorsement (lines 39-40). Mr. Agnew proceeds with the example of Arnold Schwarzenegger endorsing some kind of weightlifting machine. In contrast to Mr. Tong, though, Mr. Agnew does not make himself a participant in this or the previous example (even though in reality, Mr. Agnew was known to the class to work out daily in the school’s weight room). Like Mr. Tong, Mr. Agnew positions the students as potential consumers of the product (“you want to look like her? Well drink Diet Coke,” lines 33-34; and “use this machine and you’ll get

big and strong,” lines 42-43). And then Mr. Tong, with his self-abasing strategy, inserts himself into the example (line 44: “like me”), constructing yet again a humorous contrast (he is smiling, and the students are smiling), this time between his normal-size physique and the “big and strong” one of Arnold Schwarzenegger as promised by the advertiser. His strategy adds an implicit “beware consumer,” showing as it does that if “like Mr. Tong” is the outcome of using the machine, the product claim is false.

Mr. Agnew continues talking about celebrities advertising products and mentions that often there is not any connection between the product and the celebrity, that the product had nothing to do with the person becoming a celebrity. Mr. Tong interrupts him:

Excerpt 2 (2SO25AGNEW, 1/28/98): “endorsement,” cont’d

1 Mr A: right? now, there is in some cases there is a
 2 correlation. if we take a famous basketball player and
 3 he’s advertising basketball shoes, that’s one thing. but
 4 they have famous people advertising everything from
 5 ketchup to who knows what. just because that famous movie
 6 star likes that brand of ketchup does that mean [you are?
 7 Mr T: [I’ve got
 8 a good one for you. Jackie Chan (in a) Mountain Dew
 9 (commercial now)
 10 Fernando: Oh yeah, Jackie Chan.
 11 Mr T: Yeah, and now all the Asian kids like to drink Mountain
 12 Dew because of that.
 13 Mr A: ((laughs))

The majority of popular culture examples which both Mr. Tong and Mr. Agnew used in the class assumed an American, male market. With the exception of Katarina Witt, the male teachers offered the class examples of male celebrities endorsing products that were in some cases consumed by all (e.g., McDonalds’ French fries) but in others, were for a strictly male market (e.g., weightlifting machines, basketball shoes). Occasionally, as Mr. Tong’s example, “all the Asian kids” (line 11) reveals, age and ethnicity were

specifiers in positioning consumers vis-à-vis the products. The foregrounding of “all the Asian kids” may have prompted the nonAsian Fernando’s comment, “oh yeah, Jackie Chan,” as a means of displaying his familiarity so as to join the others in the example. At the same time, Fernando’s remark may support Mr. Tong’s casting of Jackie Chan as a primarily-Asian popular culture icon. After all, neither Fernando nor any of the others made similar remarks like “oh yeah, Michael Jordan” or “oh yeah, McDonalds,” when those popular culture icons were mentioned. Fernando’s “oh yeah” in “oh yeah, Jackie Chan” sounded like what CA calls a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1994; see also Schiffrin, 1987).

As Mr. Agnew continues to stress the connection of endorsement to higher product prices passed on to (male) consumers, several students join the talk, positioning themselves in varying ways vis-à-vis the commercials and products. Given the gendered products and market that the teachers have constructed, it is not surprising that two of the three students who participate are male:

Excerpt 3 (2SO25AGNEW, 1/28/98): “endorsement,” cont’d

1 Mr A: (continues))If you want to wear Nike shoes, and Nike never
 2 had Michael Jordan advertising them, paying him God knows
 3 how much money, what would happen to the price of Nike?
 4 Ernesto: It [would go, down.
 5 Mr A: [It would come down. It would be cheaper for you to buy,
 6 but because they pay him millions of dollars, the company
 7 doesn’t lose money, the company just adds on to the price.
 8 and you as the buyer, you pay [for it.
 9 Fernando: [(xxx) that’s why you buy
 10 [Airwalks. ‘cause nobody endorses them.
 11 Mr A: [Everything you buy, when a famous person endorse, you’re
 12 paying for it. same thing with the commercial. they paid
 13 one point three. million dollars for 30 seconds of [a
 14 commercial during the Superbowl.
 15 Fernando: [That
 16 was pretty cool, though.
 17 Ivon: That’s a lot.

1 Fernando: That was pretty cool.

In this exchange, Ernesto indicates he knows that celebrity endorsement drives the product price up, and Fernando joins in as a knowing consumer with some agency, choosing an unendorsed and thus cheaper product (Airwalks, line 11). When Mr. Agnew mentions the cost of Superbowl commercials, there emerge some clear differences of opinion, with Fernando saying, and then repeating, that they were “pretty cool” (lines 17, 19) despite the price, while Ivon , the one female speaking, felt differently: “That’s a lot,” she says in line 18.

About twenty minutes later in the same class session, Mr. Agnew introduces “bandwagon” and “jumping on the bandwagon.” Again, the domain of male sports is invoked for teaching. As Mr. Tong takes over in Hmong, he brings up the recently televised Superbowl and the two football teams playing in it, the Packers and the Broncos, to explain “bandwagon”:

Excerpt 4 (2SO25AGNEW, 1/28/98): “bandwagon”

(Italics = Hmong)

1 Mr T ((continues))I give another good example. *ok, you look ok,*
 2 *for those that like* football, *we like Packer right, but if*
 3 *Bronco win then they said we don't like Packer, we like*
 4 *Bronco right, you see that?=
 5
 6 ((during above translation))
 7 Fernando: Agnew. (...) people at that crosswalk walk up on the sky.
 8 see that?
 9 Mr A: what?
 10 Fernando: Crosswalk? see? everybody walks upside-down.
 11 Mr A: What?
 12 Fernando: Look at that (xx). past the stop sign?
 13 Mr A: Oh yeah, you're right.
 14
 15 ((immediately following Mr T's utterance above))
 16 Ernesto: =Were you disappointed when they lost, Mister?
 17 Mim: *Throw Packer away right**

1 Mr T: *Right, throw Packer away*
2 Ernesto: You don't watch football?
3 Fernando: He doesn't watch anything

As is often the case, there are several conversations going on simultaneously—Mr. Tong addresses the students in Hmong while Fernando asks Mr. Agnew about the crosswalk sign he could see outside the classroom window. Mr. Tong continues, and shifts into English to say he’s going to “give another good example” (line 1). Right after he mentions the names of the Superbowl football teams, Ernesto, who does not know Hmong, has apparently overheard and recognized Mr. Tong’s Superbowl references, because right after, he directs a question to Mr. Agnew (line 16), asking whether he was disappointed that “they” lost. In the way that he posed the question, Ernesto makes an assumption not only that Mr. Agnew is familiar with American football and the recent Superbowl and is possibly a fan of the losing team, but by using “they” in “they lost,” assumes that Mr. Agnew has also overheard Mr. Tong, and understands the referent. There is no audible response by Mr. Agnew (and he is off-camera so we are unable to see him). It is likely that he conveys something paralinguistically, which explains Ernesto’s confirmation-seeking move, “You don’t watch football?” leading Fernando to answer for him “he doesn’t watch anything” (line 20).

Clearly, the sports icons invoked by Mr. Tong in this and other examples have a resonance for some in the class which transcends language as well as ethnic boundaries (but not necessarily gender). While the nonHmong-speaking Ernesto may not have comprehended the point that Mr. Tong was making when he invoked the Superbowl, the very mention of the teams drew Ernesto’s attention and interest, giving him at least minimal access to the Hmong discourse. This provided him with an instructionally-supportable topic (after all, Mr. Tong was using it) with which to try, unsuccessfully, to engage the teacher in a conversation. Just as invoking the example of football as a means

of explaining a civics concept (here, “bandwagon”) served to engage some in the discourse while marginalizing others, so did many of the popular culture examples used by the teacher and his aide. Though there was variation in who became centrally involved and who remained on the periphery of the talk, the consistent use, by the male teachers, of sports examples within a stereotypically male domain tended to engage the male students but silence the females. (And it should be noted that Ms. Li, the other Hmong aide, was also not a participant in these conversations.)

On occasion, though, it was the female students who were the more assertive and central participants. At times, when the male teachers offered stereotypic descriptions of women, female students would actively attempt to resist or alter the identities within the popular culture model that the teachers and students were co-constructing. The next excerpt is an example. Late in the spring semester, Mr. Agnew and Mr. Tong, in introducing the term “impulse buying,” collaboratively link it to a popular culture stereotype of women as “shop ’til you drop,” out-of-control, impulsive consumers. This negative portrayal of women shoppers is energetically resisted by some of the female students who, in fact, do not confine their opposition to the English conversations-- they resist as well when Mr. Tong offers a Lao translation and following that, when he switches to Hmong. In the excerpt, we see the same discourse of resistance continuing to appear as speakers move from one language to another:

Excerpt 5 (2SO44AGNEW, 5/11/98): “impulse buyer”

(*Italics* = Lao, then Hmong)

- 1 Mr A: Okay, next term, say the word impulse.
2 SS: Impulse

3 Mr A: Impulse buyer. something that you do impulse is, English
4 expression would be spur of the moment, something you
5 don't plan on, you don't think about. an impulse buyer.
6 Mr T: Mostly women.
7 Mr A: Yeah, it's mostly women.
8 Ivon: ((clears her throat)) ((also makes several unintelligible
9 comments during Mr A's utterance))
10 Mr A: Statistics state that. ((continues))
11 .
12 .
13 Mr A: ((continues))they say the best time to go grocery
14 shopping is after you've just finished, eating. if you go
15 grocery shopping when you're hungry? you have a tendency
16 to impulsively buy more.
17 Mr T: And all the women get together to go shopping, (it's
18 worse)
19 Mr A: ((laughs))
20 Ivon: Depends on what women you're with.
21 Mr A: Well women are the impulse buyers, statistically.
22 ((continues))
23 .
24 .
25 Mr T: **((translates in Lao))** *The word impulse buying means we
26 buy things when we do not plan to (.) we go right? you
27 guys (.) Mr. Tong (.) you four girls go shopping together
28 and see (x) you buy (x) right? you have 1000 dollars in
29 your purse and spend it all (.) they call it impulse
30 buying (.) because what women (.) [women enjoy*
31 MeeLee: [We buy grocery, we go buy xxx]
32 Mee: (xxx)
33 Mr T: shopping because women like that
34 Anong: ((Women)) like to dress up/ make up
35 Mr T: No in America
36 Phancha: Like to buy
37 Mr T: Like to buy (.) in America (xx) men like to have women
38 Phancha: That's why, I heard help each other which is (x) if ((a
39 couple)) have a son it is difficult to buy (x) ((smiles))
40 Mr T: When women go to the market ((stores)) they buy everything
41 they see right? men are different (.) when men go to buy
42 shoes right? they go to the shoe shop and buy shoes and go
43 home (.) for women? when they want to buy shoes how many
44 hours will it take before they reach home? (..) they walk
45 around ((smiles)) around and see good things things they
46 like (..) they call these people impulse buyers in America
47 they sell lots of stuff because of the impulse buyers for
48 example you don't see many markets ((stores)) for men
49 right? there are just for women very very few are for men
50 ((I)) don't want to give any more example 'cause Mr. Tong's
51 wife is just like that ((smiles, walks away)) okay?
52
53 Khammay: ((growls)) [Gossip about your own wife
54 Mr T: **((shifts to Hmong))** [Okay, the word impulse buying,
55 impulse buying is people, xx women only, for example if you
56 guys go the mall. You guys go buy, you guys not going to

57 *buy this shirt only but you guys go at 8 and what time you*
 58 *guys will come back?*
 59 Xy: *Get back around 4pm*
 60 Mr T: *Some people are 4 or 5 o'clock that usually get back home*
 61 *right. she go, she go and buy whatever she see right.*
 62 *because they, they call it impulse buy is they. They watch*
 63 *the women, they set it up so that the women will buy it.*
 64 *But they says that in America here, it's the women that buy*
 65 *a lot of stuff. He give example that if a guy go to the*
 66 *store what does he buy? He said I'm going to buy a shoe and*
 67 *he go straight to buy a shoes only right.*
 68 Xy: *Some husband says that you saw the stuff you going to buy*
 69 *already, some husband*
 70 Mr T: *Yep, some husband, doesn't matter if male Hmong or American*
 71 *it the same too. But*
 72 MeeLee: *Mr. Tong women used more stuff than men*

In lines 1-22, “impulse buyer” is introduced by Mr. Agnew, but it is Mr. Tong who begins framing it as gendered: “mostly women” (line 6). Mr. Agnew indicates his agreement and then, perhaps defensively, in light of comments not audible to us by one of the female Spanish speakers, Ivon, offers “statistics” as support (line 10). Though Mr. Agnew gives a nongendered tip for avoiding impulsive grocery shopping (eat first), Mr. Tong reframes it as a women’s problem (line 16), which elicits laughter from Mr. Agnew. At that point, Ivon attempts to revise and restrict Mr. Tong’s generalization about women shoppers by responding in line 18: “Depends on what women you’re with,” which prompts Mr. Agnew to again invoke statistics to support his assertion about women being impulse buyers

As Mr. Tong shifts into Lao (line 23), he moves rapidly from a general, nongendered definition of impulse buying to a participant example (Wortham, 1994) portraying impulse buying as women’s behavior. In this exchange, we see a number of female students responding, with several, like Ivon earlier, displaying resistance to what is being constructed. And it engages both Lao-speaking Hmong females as well as the Lao females. In line 28, MeeLee, one of the Hmong speakers, interrupts Mr. Tong to

assert “We buy grocery,” which could be interpreted as her offering a reason why women, according to Mr. Tong, “spend it all” (line 26). And even though Phancha, a Lao student, says women “Like to buy” (line 33), she is not simply agreeing with the generalization, because she offers circumstances and reasons for shopping (lines 35-36)—helping each other, the challenge of shopping for a son. When Mr. Tong declares that his wife is “just like that”—an impulse buyer (line 45), Khammay, a Lao speaker, immediately growls and verbalizes her disapproval, saying “Gossip about your own wife,” though it is not clear that this was intended for Mr. Tong’s hearing, as she said it simultaneous to Mr. Tong’s shift to Hmong.

In addressing the students in Hmong (line 49 on), Mr. Tong creates, as he did in Lao, a participant example in which the students (“you guys” in the translation, apparently treated by the female students as a nongendered term) are hypothetical shoppers at the mall. He asks how long they would be at the mall if they go there at 8:00. A female student, married with several young children, answered that she would return around 4:00, implying a whole day of shopping. Mr. Tong uses her declared stretch of time to point out that it is women who buy “a lot of stuff” (lines 57-58) and consequently, businesses arrange their products for women to buy. Though Mr. Tong focuses on impulse buying, it is not the impulsivity that the female students take up in Hmong, but rather male-female differences in the amount of items shopped for. MeeLee, who had joined the earlier Lao exchange, again provides a reason for the gender differences in shopping: “Mr. Tong women used more stuff than men” (line 65).

As we have seen in all three conversations, it is female students—in English, in Lao, and then in Hmong-- several of whom otherwise did not usually join the talk-- who

repositioned women away from Mr. Agnew's and Mr. Tong's assertion about their general impulsivity in shopping, offering instead a more complex set of reasons why it is women who shop, why it takes them so long, and who they shop for. The male students were notably silent in all three of the conversations. (Though so too, it should be noted, was Ms. Li. She may have chosen to hold back to give the female students their opportunity to disagree; since we do not know, it is also possible that she accepted the stereotype being constructed.)

Discussion and Conclusions

The discourse excerpts that are the focus of this paper are typical, in their general participation patterns, of the interactions we observed through the year in Mr. Agnew's civics class. That is, most of the talk in the class comes from the teacher and his aides, directed to students many of whom look attentive but primarily remain listeners. As discussed earlier, this may be, in part, due to the cultural tendencies of the Hmong students who made up the majority of the class. However, even some of the quietest students were observed to take turns in the talk that considered particular popular culture examples, especially, as we saw, when they did not match the students' cultural beliefs.

When considering the kinds of cultural models that are co-constructed in the exchanges, we look for the values and beliefs that implicitly and explicitly are constructed through the use of popular culture in the talk, points of conflict, and the behaviors which already appear to be normalized (Gee, 1999). And, does the talk direct itself to critique of or change in the models, or serve simply to enforce the status quo (Gee, 1999; Giroux and Simon, 1989)?

What is obvious across the five excerpts provided (and which are representative of interactions in civics class over the year of our study) is the assumption that a major, shared identity is that of consumer—whether as shoppers, or as viewers or readers of advertisements being coaxed by a favorite celebrity to buy something or drawn to the cleverness and wit of Superbowl ads. That the civics class constitutes itself as a set of consumers is not questioned in the discourse. That they may use different texts to inform their consumption—e.g., TV versus magazines—is apparent in the discourse but not taken up for consideration. However, both Mr. Agnew and Mr. Tong do foreground for critical consideration the mechanisms by which advertising encourages consumers to spend more than they might otherwise—whether for the \$110 Nike shoes that Mr. Tong mentions, or the Mountain Dew that Jackie Chan drinks, or the store displays that encourage impulse buying.

The consumer identity that Mr. Agnew and Mr. Tong jointly construct for the students is one who is gender stereotyped and without much agency, a consumer who is easily drawn to or manipulated toward consumption—by celebrity endorsements, by appealing store displays geared toward (women’s) impulsivity. Similarly, the Superbowl viewer used by Mr. Tong in his illustration of “jumping on the bandwagon” is easily swayed by others to shift support from the losing team to the winning team. It is Mr. Tong who positions himself, as well, as a gullible consumer, whether drawn to McDonalds’ French Fries or avidly following football on television. In fact, in one of the class sessions not reported on, Mr. Tong talks about how his 21-month-old son *makes* him and his wife buy two McDonalds’ Happy Meals so he can get a Beanie Baby. As Mr. Tong says, “they [McDonalds] do anything to make you buy.” Mr. Agnew, on the

other hand, does not position himself as directly manipulated by the popular culture examples he uses (though he chose as an example an ad for a weightbuilding machine, and he happens to lift weights himself).

Though there are relatively fewer turns taken by students in these exchanges, there are several student contributions which show that the students do not necessarily accept the easily-manipulated and gendered consumer image offered by Mr. Agnew and Mr. Tong, and are instead more product-savvy, independent, and critical of (at least some) gender stereotypes than they are given credit for. Though Mr. Agnew ignores his comment, Fernando (Excerpt 3) mentions that one can buy Airwalks rather than Nikes, because, not being celebrity-endorsed, they are cheaper. In the same excerpt, Ivon, rather than being impressed by the creativity and wit of the Superbowl ads, remarks on their expense. And a number of female students-- English-speaking, Hmong-speaking, and Lao-speaking-- resist Mr. Agnew and Mr. Tong's stereotyping of women as impulse buyers. The female students award more agency to women as shoppers and complexify the shopping experience, offering examples of the decisions and responsibility women take toward the act of shopping which can make it take long, be expensive, and involve many products, but not be simply characterized as impulsive.

There is also some evidence that the students recognize the conflict and inconsistency common to one's engagement with popular culture. For example, while Fernando (Excerpt 3) acknowledges the immense expense (and implications for consumers) of the Superbowl commercials, he also declares the pleasure he experiences from watching them ("That was pretty cool, though").

While Mr. Tong, who is Hmong, used Hmong cultural examples more often in his teaching than did Mr. Agnew, it is not the case that Mr. Agnew used more American culture-based—or stereotypical—examples than Mr. Tong. In fact, over the course of our year’s observations, it seemed to us that Mr. Tong often made more use of American popular culture stereotypes and icons than did Mr. Agnew, and among the most frequently mentioned were McDonalds and American football. As the excerpts show, when Mr. Agnew used a popular culture example, he sometimes did a “familiarity check” first, indicating that he did not assume that the students were conversant with it. For example, he brought up Katarina Witt with the explanation “she’s a famous skater,” and before going ahead about Arnold Schwarzenegger, he asked students if they knew him. Mr. Agnew may recognize that such familiarity checks are necessary, given his greater age (he is in his 40s), his individual interests which may differ from the others, and his stated aversion toward TV. And as he is no doubt aware, cultural models are mutable, and popular culture products, celebrities, and events are quickly replaced by others (Giroux and Simon, 1989, citing Gramsci). Given the generational, cultural, and educational differences between teachers and high school students, the invoking of popular culture is one that often exposes the adults in the classroom as “out of it” in the students’ eyes, presenting for the teacher the challenge of “keeping up” if popular culture is to infuse her or his curriculum. (For example, the fact that Mr. Agnew did not watch TV meant that he could not join the frequent talk about sports teams and scores.)

Engagement with popular culture blurred ethnic and language proficiency boundaries among the students as well as the teachers. That is, it was not obviously the case that the “English speakers” (Mr. Agnew’s and Mr. Tong’s term for the students who

had a mid to high proficiency in English) had stronger identification with American popular culture than did the “non-English speakers.” In other words, they did not automatically have more *access* to popular culture examples than did those with more limited proficiency. It is likely that a popular culture icon such as McDonalds is one which, by now, everyone—whether an actual customer or not—recognizes on some level. So too, perhaps, the image of Michael Jordan, though the game of basketball may not be as universally familiar. Obviously, that Mr. Tong was available to offer translations in Hmong and Lao made the popular culture-laced talk comprehensible linguistically to the students. But we have seen, as well, that even when using a language unfamiliar to the listener (as Hmong was to Ernesto, or as English was, to some extent, to some of the lower-level students), the invoking of familiar popular culture examples generates at least a kind of skeletonized recognition—some degree of access to what is being talked about, with the potential for participating. Of course, the specific teaching point which the popular culture example is used for may be lost on students. And Duff’s (2002) concern about the problem of discourse access for ESL students remains important; even if some of the ESL learners have engaged in the popular culture practices brought up in the discourse, limitations in their proficiency—and perhaps cultural style differences—raise challenges to their gaining access to and participating in the discourse. All of those reasons notwithstanding, the frequent use of a variety of popular culture practices and icons has benefits even for low-proficiency ESL learners. For one thing, as we have mentioned, the resonance of a familiar example makes the discourse at least somewhat accessible, and for another thing, the variety and mutability of popular culture (Giroux and Simon, 1989, citing Gramsci) ensure that while one example might engage some

students and not others, another example might have a different pattern of recognition and appeal. That is, if a variety of popular culture examples are used, the participation framework (Goffman, 1981) may keep changing, so that the same students do not remain marginalized while others remain central. Given the ubiquity of popular culture, for better or for worse, teachers can assume that all students, even those whose English is very limited, have some investment in popular culture practices, which can be considered a resource that provides at least minimal access to the discourse for students. As the excerpts illustrated, students, and teachers, are not equally invested in the same popular culture practices and icons—nor do they necessarily share beliefs about a given example, such as relating women to impulse buying. Following Freire and Giroux' (1989) argument for developing a critical pedagogy, recognition of this variation in investment and belief should lead to a critical reflection on why that is, and what that reveals about students' identities and values—what cultural models they hold. Such reflection offers the opportunity, in any class but especially so in civics, to help students become, in Freire and Giroux' (1989: ix) words, “critical rather than merely good citizens.”

Reference to popular culture has long been a significant part of students' discourse with each other, but it has not been as widely recognized for its place in the discourse jointly constructed by teachers and their students—that is, popular culture having a place within the “official curriculum” rather than as “counterscript” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). Considering that in North America and no doubt elsewhere, classrooms are becoming increasingly heterogeneous in language and culture, it is important to know the dynamic, the potential, and the implications of popular culture use in such classrooms,

not only for students' language and subject matter learning, but for their identities as individuals in societies which are new to many of them.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions:

[overlapping talk
(())	remark by transcriber
(0.7)	pause in tenths of second
<u>underline</u>	stressed word or syllable
CAPITALS	loud volume
(xxx)	inaudible or possibly said
<i>italics</i>	spoken in Hmong or Lao (as indicated)

¹ The author appreciates the very helpful comments and suggestions offered by the reviewers for revising the manuscript.

² The widely-used, standardized “Test of English as a Foreign Language,” which learners in many settings worldwide prepare for with the help of practice manuals and special instruction.

³ Following current sociolinguistic theories of discourse, we believe that all interactions involve the joint, or “co-construction,” of meaning by participants. (See the seminal article by Jacoby and Ochs, 1995.)

⁴ Data for this paper come from the project, “The Socialization of Diverse Learners into Subject Matter Discourse,” Jane Zuengler and Cecilia Ford, Principal Investigators. The project was part of the Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA), which is supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI Award #R305A60005). However, the views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Department of Education or of CELA.

⁵ All place and person names are pseudonyms.

⁶ It was important to have two researchers in the classroom, as one was needed to operate the video equipment while the other took observational notes.

⁷ We were fortunate to find a native Hmong-speaking man in his 20s to translate much of the talk between Mr. Tong and the students. (This man joined our research team in Mr. Agnew’s class in the year following the current focus.) (Ms. Li’s voice was not audible enough to recognize much of what she said.) A native speaker of a Lao dialect of Thai, also in his 20s, translated the Lao talk. We recognize that translated material presents issues for researchers. Fairclough (1995: 191), for example, believes that “discourse analysis papers should [only] reproduce and analyse textual samples in the original language.” We disagree, as Fairclough (and others) appear to assume that the original language is more authentic or closer to a truth of what happened than is a translation. Transcripts of talk—whether in the original language or not, and the data analysis process in general, involve representation, the building of an account of something (Coffey and Atkinson, 1995). And translation involves representation as well. While that in itself poses its own challenges, it does not follow that translated material is farther from “the truth” than is the material in the original language.

Reviewers of this paper asked why the English translations of Mr. Tong’s Hmong and Lao seem nonstandard or nonnative, and whether Mr. Tong’s speech was actually more standard. The Hmong and Thai-Lao speakers who translated the talk for us had acquired English in different contexts and displayed what might be different varieties or dialects of English. This is worth considering when reading the English translations of Mr. Tong’s Hmong and Lao. (Issues of representation, however, concern all research, and are not limited to questions of language translation.) The Hmong speaker had been in the U.S. and in U.S. schools since he was an adolescent. If one compared his English to standard American native speaker English, one might say that he exhibited some

pronunciation accent as well as some nonstandardisms in his oral and written English. He may have acquired a nonnative variety that could be called Hmong English (see Wolfram, Christian, and Hatfield [1986] on a similar phenomenon, the emergence of Vietnamese English in communities in the U.S.). The Thai-Lao translator, on the other hand, had acquired EFL in his schooling in Thailand before coming to the U.S. several years before. Though his spoken and written English was not entirely natively like, it exhibited fewer nonstandardisms and could be characterized as fluent EFL.

At the same time, each of the translators arguably had also acquired standard English and could produce it in appropriate contexts. Evidence of this was the fact that the Hmong translator had received an undergraduate degree in the U.S. (from the author's institution), while the Thai-Lao translator, having received a Masters degree at the same university, was then admitted to doctoral studies there. Since each translator was asked to translate Mr. Tong's speech into English as closely as he could, this author believes that both translators had the ability to represent the talk in standard English if that was necessary. Though the translators were not asked specifically about this, it can be concluded that Mr. Tong's speech was to some extent nonstandard.

⁸This exchange occurred before the California recall election of 2003 which elected Arnold Schwarzenegger governor of the state.