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**A Discourse Analysis of Literature Discussions in a College-Level
Intensive ESL Course**

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**A Discourse Analysis of Literature Discussions in a College-Level
Intensive ESL Course**

by

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A Discourse Analysis of Literature Discussions in a College-Level Intensive ESL Course

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The purpose of this study was to describe and interpret young adult ESL (English as a Second Language) students' participation in discussions of literature in a high-intermediate level reading classroom at a university-affiliated ELP (English Learning Program) program. Additionally, this study explored the nature and characteristics of talk generated by ESL students within the context of literature discussions.

Naturalistic methods of data collection were employed in keeping with the constructivist paradigm, including classroom observations, audio and video recordings, transcripts of audio and video recordings, field notes, interviews with the teacher and students, teacher resources, and student artifacts. This naturalistic inquiry drew from qualitative traditions in its design, and the study was further guided by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and discourse analysis.

The study findings indicated that literature discussions were structured by six stages: (1) reading at home, (2) setting up and review, (3) students redefining the tasks,

(4) students doing the tasks, (5) sharing with the class, and (6) taking in-class quizzes. Analysis revealed that these sequenced stages that allowed for a shifting of roles and positions between the teacher and students and among students enabled students to have regular and extended opportunities for talk and interaction.

The findings of the study demonstrated that the student-to-student exchanges featured more discursive talk as the students were encouraged to construct meanings collaboratively and to engage in interactive discourse with one another. The implications of these findings in terms of teaching as mediation and the nature of talk in ESL classrooms are discussed.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

The Statement of the Problem

In this dissertation I examine the classroom talk of a college-level intensive ESL (English as a Second Language) course at a university-affiliated ELP (English Learning Program) program. Classroom talk has been extensively studied during the past few years and has been reported in the literature on discourse analysis and classroom studies (e.g., Barnes & Todd, 1977; Cazden, 1988; Johnson, 1995; Lemke, 1990; 1999; Mercer, 1995, 2000; Nystrand, 1997; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, 1992). Research indicates that classroom discourse is socially determined and largely recurrent. It has social and pedagogical functions, and these functions are produced under predictable discourse patterns of classroom communication systems (Cazden, 1988) in which the role of language extends beyond the communicating of propositional information to the establishment and maintenance of relationships in the classrooms. Such predictable patterns are revealed by the way the teacher and students typically interact in the course of lessons. Thus, the quality of discourse patterns is believed to correlate with teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Wong-Fillmore, 1985) as it fosters learners' verbal contributions to and active participation in discourse. Research further shows that what teachers say to students or how teachers structure their talk has a profound impact on students' language use, and hence learning opportunities that are made available to them.

Research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) demonstrates the importance of talk through interaction in second language development (Lantolf, 2000; Pica, 1987, 1991, 1994; Platt & Brooks, 1994; Swain, 1995). The underlying assumption is that second language development can be promoted by offering opportunities for meaningful interaction, thus promoting comprehensible input, as well as opportunities for productive language use and feedback (Snow & Brinton, 1997).

Swain (1995, 2000), for example, proposed three functions of talk that can promote second language learning: (1) noticing of the structural characteristics of the target language, (2) practice in using them, and (3) opportunities to reflect on them. In other words, it is argued that through talk students learn not only the structural components of a language but also the communicative application of these components. Empirical studies of second language interaction have mainly focused on teacher-student and student-student interactional patterns and have been based on a more traditional psycholinguistic perspective of language and learning. In this perspective, language is assumed to be a discrete set of linguistic systems external to the learner, whereas learning is viewed as the process of assimilating the structural components of these systems into preexisting mental structures (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). Thus, the development of second language is viewed as an abstract, solitary process hidden in the minds of individuals rather than as a visible process that occurs in the social relationships among learners.

In a different direction, there has been a growing understanding and acknowledgement of the contributions made by research on the socially constructed nature of language learning, and these studies have been placed in the larger social context of real communicative interaction and its impact on language development (Block, 1996; Firth & Wagner, 1997, 1998; Gibbons, 2006; Hall, 1995, 1997; Lantolf,

2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ohta, 1995, 2000). Sociocultural researchers in the field of SLA view language classrooms — and more particularly, activities or tasks comprising specific classroom environments — as important sites of learning and development. The underlying assumption is that the source of language development is intrinsically linked to learners' repeated and regular participation in the classroom activities and events in which they engage (Consolo, 2000, 2006; Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). According to Salomon and Perkins (1998), the notion of learning a language as a constructive process situated in particular social and cultural contexts opposes the concept of the individual learners acquiring knowledge and skills as transferable commodities. Takahashi, Austin and Morimoto (2000) supported this notion that “each particular classroom offers specific opportunities for learning that defy prior prescription of sequences of skills or language outcomes” (p. 119).

With such increasing attention being paid to social interaction in the field of SLA, this study builds on the classroom discourse studies of both first language mainstream and second language classroom contexts. This dissertation research is based on several assumptions about the sociocultural nature of language and learning, which are discussed in later chapters.

The classroom talk that I attempt to describe in this dissertation is talk shaped by literature in a young adult ESL classroom. A body of research on literature (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran, 2003; Hymes, 1971; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Murphy, Wilkinson & Soter, 2011; Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey & Alexander, 2009; Nystrand, 1997, 2006; Resnick, 2010; Soter, Wilkinson, Murphy, Rudge, Reninger & Edwards, 2008, to name a few) demonstrates that literature can be used as a springboard for classroom talk. Several studies have also been conducted in the contexts

of second language classrooms (Boyd, 2011; Chu, 2008; Kim, 2004; Wallace, 2003). In literacy learning and teaching in ESL classrooms, for example, language is both the vehicle through which students not only inquire about the content they are learning, but also acquire proficiency in English. As students learn English in the classroom, they are also learning how to use this language, whether it is English as a second language or the language of literate talk (Boyd, 2011) to articulate and share their ideas. It has been asserted that although the focus is not on formal language development, opportunities to engage in discussion about and around texts allow students to draw more fully on their existing linguistic resources and to stretch them at the same time (Wallace, 2003). What is more, grammatical accuracy and general fluency can ultimately be extended in the search for being clear and cooperative in talk exchanges. Therefore, talk in the target language is both a process for developing communicative competence and expanding linguistic repertoires (Echevarria & Graves, 2007; Lee, 2006).

My interest in classroom talk, in particular talk about literature in ESL classrooms, began in my pilot study which was conducted in several ESL classes at the university-affiliated ELP (English Learning Program) program. The pilot study lasted across the semesters at the same site. Among the classroom events and activities in different classes with different students, literature discussions in Ms. Brown' class was found to generate particular types of classroom talk. My observations revealed this classroom to be one that valued and nurtured types of student talk that was more extended and elaborated. As a result of this pilot study, the purpose for this dissertation study was to uncover and describe classroom conditions that promoted elaborated and extended student talk and to explicate what fostered such extended learner-use of language and how the teacher structured the classroom talk to support it.

This dissertation study is grounded in the understanding that “each classroom must find its own way of working, taking into account both what each member brings by way of past experience at home, at school, and in the wider community — their values, interests, and aspirations — as well as the outcomes that they are required to achieve” (Wells, 2001, p. 173). I attempt to show how the teacher and students in the classroom are enacting and developing their particular ways of thinking and talking about text, or literate talk, associated with the routines and norms that are the focus of this study. I also endeavor to illustrate how the culture of the classroom under study is created by and demonstrated through those norms for talk — norms that affect opportunities for the amount and type of student talk and shape what can be learned and how it is learned in the classroom.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, this study is an attempt to illustrate and interpret young adult ESL (English as a Second Language) students’ participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in a high-intermediate level ESL classroom at a university-affiliated ELP (English Learning Program) program. This study attempts to describe the processes through which knowledge, understandings, and actions are jointly constructed through negotiations as the classroom interactions progress. It is assumed that these negotiations of social interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, can affect the dynamics and complexity of the classroom participation in activity and produce different learning opportunities in dialogic literature discussions (Hall, 2000).

Second, this study attempts to uncover the nature and value of student and teacher talk about text that occurred within the context of literature discussions. Research on literature discussions in classroom settings suggests that social interactions around literature help students develop literacy skills, promote higher level thinking skills (DeNicolo, 2010; Gambrell, Mazzoni & Almasi, 2000; Martinez-Roldán, 2005) and better understand what they have read by sharing different ideas, opinions and thoughts on the topic at hand. The focus should be, therefore, on observing and documenting how interaction in literature discussions can provide ESL students with opportunities to share and collaborate across linguistic and literacy knowledge by examining the process of task completion among groups of students and for individual students in various activities. By focusing on the sequence or structure of the lessons within the context of literature discussions (Gibbons, 2006), as I do in this study, rather than on a single lesson or exchange, it may be possible to show how the changes in the nature of the discourse and in the differential interactional roles and positions taken by both the teacher and students have the potential to influence the second language and literacy learning of ESL students in the classroom.

My goal in this study is neither to investigate ways of incorporating literature into second language classrooms nor to explore the perceptions of literature by the teacher or students. I do, however, provide the ways in which the teacher creates a classroom environment that supports literary discussion while also investigating to what extent ESL students interact with the literary text and with their peers. Ultimately, a close investigation of the process of task completion in literature discussions would have implications for how literature can be effectively incorporated into the teaching strategies and the second language teaching and learning curriculum. This study can inform an

understanding of instructional practices in the ESL classroom that support students' language learning and literacy development while participating in literature discussions.

Overview of the Guiding Literature

Three bodies of literature frame this study of young adult ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom at a university-affiliated ELP program.

First, this study draws broadly on the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) to examine the ways in which literature discussions mediated ESL students' participation and construction of knowledge. Drawing from the work of Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural researchers adopt a particular view of how language and social interaction are involved in the process of human development. From this perspective, the study of human development focuses not on the individual but rather on what people do in the course of everyday events with others and on how participating in such activities shapes development (Rogoff, 1995, 2003; Wertsch, 1979). Such events, and activity within events, are viewed as socially and culturally constituted by members of a particular community through interaction. It is through language that individuals make sense of their experiences during events. Therefore, development can be seen as occurring not just through participating in events but also through the activity itself (Gutiérrez, 1994).

The sociocultural perspective has implications for interaction and the process of second language learning. Researchers in the field of SLA agree that interaction has the potential to result in second language development (Donato, 1994; Hall, 2000; Lantolf,

2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995). They assert that interaction is central to the meaning-making process of the classroom and involves negotiations with participants. Thus, language development interacts dynamically with the sociocultural contexts in which it occurs and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from its situational and cultural contexts (Gibbons, 2006). According to Hall (2000), the communicative activities of the classroom and its resources, the participants and their histories, and the very processes by which the participants conjointly use the resources to live their lives as members of their classrooms shape and contribute to language learning. Likewise, the instructional practices implemented by the teacher determine the learning opportunities available to students.

The second body of literature addresses the discourse patterns in classrooms. Discourse patterns can be a good indicator of how knowledge, language and instruction are perceived and shaped by the students and teachers. This study is also largely informed by a view of classroom activity as “structured experience” and associated notions of classroom work as “social practice” (Christie, 2002, p. 3). Concerns with the nature of classroom talk as structured experience have been addressed by researchers such as Mehan (1979), Cazden (1988, 2001), Lemke (1990), Nystrand (1997) and Wells (1999). Mehan (1979) points out that educational outcomes are inherent in interaction and that classroom interaction might be a good indicator of the quality of talk in the classroom. In classrooms where interaction is teacher-dominated and Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) or recitation scripts are used as the principal tools of teaching (Gutierrez, 1994; Nystrand, 1997), a fixed, static understanding of knowledge and a transmission model of learning are assumed (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). In such a classroom, students are

afforded the opportunity to respond to questions that are posed and evaluated by the teacher.

Alternatively, in dialogic instruction, students are active and significant contributors of the classroom discourse together with the teacher (Nystrand, 1997). From this perspective, knowledge emerges as it is co-constructed between participants in specific situated activities, who use the cultural artifacts at their disposal, as they work towards the collaborative achievement of a goal (Wells, 1999). Bakhtin (1981, 1984) used the term 'dialogue' to refer to the ongoing collaborative construction of understanding within all human interactions. Bakhtin emphasized the role of multiple, intersecting voices in the negotiated construction of this understanding (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). This process does not involve the transmission of knowledge from one person to the other, but rather the ongoing negotiation of meaning within the particular moment and context of its construction.

The third body of literature deals with the nature of student talk in classrooms. Promoting student talk is an explicit instructional objective in any second language classroom. Researchers and theorists of narrative and reading response (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996; Langer, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1994; Short & Burke, 1991; Wells, 1990, 2000) agree that literature-based discussions provide the potential to engender a kind of quality talk that is characterized by reflection and collaboration with others. This potential is best realized when students are engaged (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Quality talk of this kind has been described as real talk (Boyd, 2011); elaborated, extended talk (Boyd & Rubin, 2002, 2006); literate talk (Chang & Wells, 1988); elaborated forms of talk (Wallace, 2003); and the extended stretch of talk exchanges, which are a result of co-construction among participants but are less commonly sustained

by ESL students in classroom interaction. The talk is often messy, hesitant, recursive, incomplete and choppy as talk participants strive for coherence and fluency (Boyd, 2011). It is talk that is meaningful, exploratory and engaged. It is talk that spans a range of functions well beyond the informative, talk that positions students as primary knowers (Berry, 1981) and talk that is truly dialogic (Boyd, 2011).

It is assumed that the three differing theoretical perspectives of literature discussed above allow the high-intermediate level young adult ESL reading classroom to be viewed from more than one angle, thereby illuminating different aspects of the topic under investigation and providing some theoretical triangulation on the data. These three perspectives also address the key issues that are discussed in this study: (1) the nature of talk and interaction that occurred between the teacher and students and among students, (2) the role the teacher played in the interaction, and (3) the kinds of contexts and opportunities for second language development that were constructed as a result of interaction.

Overview of the Methodology

This study utilizes a naturalistic, qualitative inquiry, particularly with the use of ethnographic and discourse-analytic approaches to the classroom discourse. Data collection was of naturally occurring classroom talk that took place over nine weeks of a summer semester. The study participants were one teacher and her twelve young adult ESL students in a high-intermediate level reading and discussion class at a university-affiliated ELP program. This ESL class was purposively selected as a “best case scenario” (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993) classroom. Among the different classroom

events and activities in this ESL classroom, literature discussions were selected for analysis for several reasons. First, literature discussions created a collaborative learning environment in which students were expected to assume a central role in the construction of meaning making. Second, literature discussions as a regular event in this ESL classroom valued and nurtured diverse and abundant elaborated student talk. And third, literature discussions provided an opportunity to observe the social roles and interactional patterns that both the teacher and students constructed in activity.

Data collection relied on multiple collection methods and techniques from the classroom studied to allow data to be triangulated (Marshall, 2000) and to obtain trust (Bogdan, 2007). The primary sources of data were audio and video recordings of the classroom talk, transcriptions of those recordings, formal and informal interviews with the teacher and the students, classroom observations, extensive field notes and a collection of artifacts from the field (Silverman, 2001). I kept the structure of data collection as open as possible to be sensitive to themes and ideas that were emerging (Erickson, 1998; Strauss, 1991). As a result, I approached the data collection with a specific focus, in this case, literature discussions in this high-intermediate level young adult ESL classroom, but with a loose set of research questions relating to issues that I thought would be relevant to my study.

Data analysis proceeded in two phases. The initial analysis from qualitative traditions provided a holistic perspective on the data and enabled me to capture a big picture of how the teacher handled different stages of learning; for instance, how the various tasks and activities were introduced and maintained, and if and how connections between various texts and activities were made across lessons as the class progressed. In the second stage of the analysis, the data were analyzed by means of discourse analysis

(e.g., Hepburn & Potter, 2004; Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The teaching and learning processes in literature discussions were broken down into episodes for the micro-level of analysis. During this second analytic process, key episodes that represented the typical type of discourse were selected for subsequent transcription. The transcribed excerpts were then used for detailed discourse analysis of classroom interaction, along with the interpretations that were presented. Finally, I applied several techniques of data collection and analysis that could contribute to building trustworthiness.

The Significance of the Study

This dissertation study is significant in three ways. First, it fills a gap in existing research to depict what is happening in ESL classrooms as well as gain knowledge of discourse that occurs between teacher and students and among students. Along this line of research, the documentation of communicative activities and social interactions between teacher and students and among students, in particular, has theoretical and pedagogical implications for how interaction in an ESL classroom has the potential to result in second language development (Donato, 1994). The present study represents an empirical contribution to this issue.

Second, this study is significant because it shows the ways in which classroom discourse constructs structures and patterns of interaction in activity, the opportunities for learning afforded by these structures and patterns, and the manner in which the social and the pedagogic intertwine, as the students and teacher share their thoughts and responses to text.

Third, the combination of discourse analytic approaches and sociocultural theories of learning is an area of inquiry that is widely accepted as a way of interpreting interaction in its social context, and thus discourse analysis of ESL students' participation in literature discussions will provide important insights into the role of social interaction in second language development. This study therefore contributes to the fields of second language acquisition and classroom discourse analysis.

Research Questions

This inquiry is guided by the following two research questions:

1. What are the ways that activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly in a high-intermediate level ESL reading and discussion classroom? What is the process of task completion in literature discussions?
2. What are the nature and characteristics of talk generated by ESL students in literature discussions? How do ESL students negotiate and construct meaning with the text?

Organization of the Study

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the study and provides an overview of the research process that was undertaken. It includes the statement of the problem, the purpose and the significance of the study, relevant

theoretical underpinnings that served to frame this study, the methodological procedures and the research questions.

Chapter 2 outlines a comprehensive review of the background literature pertinent to the study. To fully understand the theoretical backgrounds that underlie and inform this study, I review three areas: the sociocultural perspectives of language and learning, discourse patterns in classrooms and the nature of student talk in language classrooms. These three areas establish a framework with which to view the findings of the study. I further include research on the use of literature in first and second language classroom settings.

Chapter 3 provides details of the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter first presents the context of the study and the methodology of data collection procedures. The chapter then provides a description of the procedures used to analyze the data, including transcription conventions, as well as discussions of the issues of trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of the study. There are two analysis sections in this chapter, each addressing one of the two research questions. Chapter 4 offers an account of how literature discussions are organized and structured in this ESL classroom. Chapter 5 focuses on the nature and characteristics of student talk with an analysis of terms of elaboration, coherence and social engagement.

Finally, drawing on the findings presented in the previous chapters, Chapter 6 offers an overview of the entire research enterprise. It includes a description of the study purpose, the methodology procedures, a summary of the findings, and implications for theory and practice with respect to how this understanding can affect classroom

instruction. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the study and possible suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study describes and interprets young adult ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom at a university-affiliated ELP program. This study is framed by three topics in the literature. First, this study draws broadly on sociocultural perspectives of language and learning as a conceptual framework to examine student participation and knowledge construction in classroom activities. The second body of literature addresses discourse patterns in classrooms. The third body of literature deals with the nature of student talk in second language classrooms. The remainder of this chapter discusses research on the use of literature in first and second language classroom settings.

Sociocultural Perspectives of Language and Learning

This study draws broadly on sociocultural perspectives of language and learning (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978) to examine the ways in which literature discussions mediate ESL students' participation and construction of knowledge. In ESL classrooms where there are real conversations about literature, ESL students have the task of learning another way of using language with new expectations for participation and engagement with information and text as they explore and construct meaning together. In these situations, social interactions are fundamental in the co-construction of new knowledge, understandings and actions, and students have access to their peers' language resources, which constitute an expanded collective language repertoire. Sociocultural theory

provides a heuristic tool to examine student participation and knowledge construction in their classroom community.

Sociocultural theory holds that human beings are social by nature, and thus, human cognition develops first through social interaction. In other words, learning occurs not in the individual learner's mind but in the interaction of a learner with others in context shaped by history, culture, and the social practices of their communities (Rogoff, 1994; 2003). From this view, language functions as a system that people use to construct meaning, which means that people are socially constructing the nature of reality through language at any particular moment in history. This position is in contrast with the view of language as an idealized system independent from its actual use. Agar (1994) asserted that from a sociocultural perspective, language cannot be viewed as having any fixed meaning independent of its context of interaction. Accordingly, individual learning and development must be understood as an emerging outcome of a whole activity system as participants, tools and artifacts mediate learning and affect how learners make sense of their experiences and their environment (Rogoff, 2003; Pacheco, 2010).

THE WORK OF VYGOTSKY

Several premises of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective are of special significance to second language learning. Vygotsky's work encapsulates four major concepts (Wertsch, 1985, 1991; Wertsch & Toma, 1995): the genetic or developmental method, mediation, internalization and the zone of proximal development. In the following section, each of these concepts is briefly discussed on their own terms and also as they relate to this study.

The first concept proposed by Vygotsky has to do with development. Vygotsky's theory posits that it is only possible to understand many aspects of mental functioning if one understands their origin and the transitions they have undergone (Wertsch & Toman, 1995). Vygotsky argues that development cannot be viewed as a linear process and that an understanding of this development is crucial to understanding the individual, cultural and social activities in which the individual is involved. This view of development can be applied to four different levels of human development including development through evolution (phylogenesis), development through history, the development of an individual over his or her life span (ontogenesis) and the development of competence as a single task or activity by a learner (microgenesis) (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Of the four domains, it is the focus on microgenesis that is most relevant to this study, as development is viewed as a result of specific interactions within a particular sociocultural context.

The second concept in Vygotsky's work that is relevant to this study is the assertion that higher forms of human mental activity are mediated by culturally constructed auxiliary means. Mediation refers to the belief that humans use tools and signs to regulate the world around them and their own and others' actions. Vygotsky proposed that cultural and psychological tools (e.g., language, works of art, writing) and other human beings (e.g., teachers, peers) mediate the learner's thinking and learning. In a classroom context, culture and community are not just factors that impact learning; they are the mediational means through which ideas are developed in collaboration with others (Cole, 1994; Daniels, 2001; Moll, 2001). The teacher also serves as a mediator, using language to support and scaffold student learning within a social relationship. In this view, the role of the teacher is integral to student learning.

The third concept in Vygotsky's work is internalization, which represents the claim that higher psychological processes originate in social interactions among human beings within an environment in which cultural tools and artifacts are present. According to Vygotsky (1978), any function in the learner's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social plane, and later, on the individual plane. First the function appears between people on the interpsychological plane, and then within the individual on the intrapsychological plane. Learning begins in the social arena, where learners are exposed to the cultural practices of the community. What they see and hear is appropriated and transformed individually before they demonstrate their understandings in a public space. Through recursive cycles of appropriation, transformation, publication and conventionalization, learners construct knowledge of their community's cultural practices as they interact with the more knowledgeable members of the community. The implication is that if cognition begins with interpersonal processes, ESL students' participation in the classroom can be seen as an integral part of the learning process. That is, language learning arises as a result of the interaction that occurs between individuals engaged in social interaction (Wertsch, 1985).

Finally, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development (ZDP) has been an important concept in the learning process. The ZDP refers to the 'cognitive gap' that exists between what an individual can do alone and what he or she can do jointly and in coordination with other more knowledgeable individuals (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). ZDP is defined as the distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem solving, and the higher level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. More specifically, the dialogically constructed

interpsychological event between individuals of unequal abilities is a way for the novice to extend current competence.

The concept of assisted performance is closely tied to the ZDP. The metaphor of ‘scaffolding’ has been used by SLA researchers to describe the nature of assisted performance and the ways in which novice participants are being assisted to accomplish tasks (Donato, 1994; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Lee, 2004; Swain, 2001). Tharp and Gallimore (1988) argued that the performance of the novice is assisted, or “scaffolded” (p. 8), in different ways at different developmental stages, and they further noted that teaching occurs when “assistance is offered at points in the ZDP at which performance requires assistance” (p. 41). Lee (2004) also noted that scaffolding is a joint and reciprocal task that demands collaborative effort. To collaborate successfully, both the expert and the novice must maintain an intersubjectivity — a shared understanding among individuals who establish reciprocal and equal perspective to accomplish a joint activity through socially negotiated interaction — by means of which they establish common goals within a shared communicative context (Darhower, 2002; De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

In a similar vein, while much work has been done with respect to the learning processes of individual students, Mercer (2000) proposes the “intermental development zone,” which refers to the shared understanding that teachers and students create together in the classroom activity. This shared understanding is constantly reconstituted as the dialogue continues and as the “long conversation” between teachers and students develops throughout a topic or unit of work (Mercer, 1995, 2002). The notion of ZDP and Mercer’s (2000) “intermental development zone” has important implications for this dissertation study. Their significance is that the teaching and learning relationship can be

viewed not as separate processes but as “a single interactive process dependent on the active roles played by all participants in the learning activity” (Gibbons, 2006, p. 27).

SOCIAL SEMIOTIC APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Broadly congruent with a sociocultural view of learning and the significance of interaction in the learning process are the social semiotic approaches to language development within the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (e.g., Halliday, 1985, 1993; Martin, 1993; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1997). Like Vygotsky (1978), Halliday (1993) views learning as social and interactionally based in origin and thus views language as central to the developmental process. Halliday (1975, 1993) argues that children learn to construct the system of meanings that represents their own model of social reality. This process occurs inside their own heads, but it takes place in contexts of social interaction. Halliday’s (1993) model of language is also particularly congruent with the way that Leont’ev (1981) discusses the centrality of tools within activity theory. From this theory, tools mediate activity and thus connect humans not only with the world of objects but also with the world of other people (Leont’ev, 1981, p. 55). Halliday’s (1993) model of language represents this phenomenon linguistically, since any act of meaning embodies both the world of humans and the world of objects through the interpersonal and ideational functions of language.

SFL is distinctive in at least three respects. First, this theory stands out in terms of the claims it makes regarding the metafunctional organization of all natural languages. Halliday (1993) describes three metafunctional types of language: ideational (comprising experiential and logical), interpersonal and textual. Second, SFL is unique in the particular uses and significance it attaches to the notion of system. Language is viewed as

a semiotic system and as a set of choices from which speakers select according to the particular context in which they find themselves. Third, SFL theory is distinctive with respect to the particular claims it makes regarding the relationship of language or text and context. Halliday (1978) stated that the context plays a part in determining what we say, and what we say plays a part in determining the context. This last element of SFL theory involves a discussion of related terms of register and genre. Register is determined collectively by the field, tenor and mode, including what is taking place, who is involved and the role language plays in a particular situation.

Genres represent different ways of organizing human experience and knowledge, and are thus goal-oriented. A genre has been defined as a purposeful, staged, cultural activity (Martin, 1984; Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987) that includes both spoken and written activities. Drawing on the notion of pedagogic discourse as incorporating the total social practices of the classroom, Christie (1995), for example, has referred to particular regularly structured sequences of learning activities as the genre. She defines these in terms of the definition for other instances of genres in language, that is, as a staged, goal-oriented social process. In the case of the classroom, genre can be referred to as an explicit pedagogic purpose with staged, goal-oriented teaching and learning processes that involves a series of stages or sequences (Christie, 1995; Gibbons, 2006). While this study draws broadly on sociocultural theory, the construct of genre within the SFL tradition is useful in theorizing the stages of the major teaching and learning sequence that characterizes the discourse of this high-intermediate level young adult ESL reading classroom under investigation.

Concerns with the nature of classroom activity as structured experience have been addressed by many researchers. Bernstein (1999), for example, used the terms

“horizontal” and “vertical” discourses to illustrate how the everyday and familiar language of the students and the technical and subject-related language of the school come together to create a more pedagogic discourse. Within the field of SLA, Mohan (2002) described a planned integrative approach that relates language learning and content. This teaching model is developed around those knowledge and discourse frameworks that are underpinned by sequencing principles, that is, from practical to theoretical content knowledge and from ‘implicit’ to ‘explicit’ discourse. Similarly, Gibbons (2006) expanded this model into the notion of the mode continuum, moving from more spoken-like to more written-like discourse of school, as an integrated framework for language teaching purposes in the ESL content-based classroom. This kind of movement can be consistent with the notion of peripheral-to-central participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which describes the early stages of socialization into the activities, identities, knowledge and practices of newcomers to a particular discourse community.

From a classroom research perspective, Gibbons (2006) claims that if language is to be used as evidence of social processes and structures, it must be studied as a system and not as isolated items. She suggests that SFL provides a tool by which it becomes possible to examine holistically the total discourse of a unit of work, so that it is possible to examine, for example, how teachers co-construct knowledge with their students over time, how classroom discourse is sequentially organized, or how teachers gradually reduce the scaffolds they provide for students. Mercer (1995) argues for classroom discourse to be viewed as a “long conversation” (p. 70) and claims that any theory for explaining how talk is used to create knowledge must take into account the concepts of context and continuity. In other words, there has to be a sense of coherence built up as the

longer conversations of the classroom unfold, with the activities and texts within each lesson clearly connecting to each other and the lesson itself representing one section in the larger text of the classroom that develops over the unit, the end goal of which is to progressively strengthen competencies with knowledge and texts. In this light, I considered ‘classroom activity as structured experience’(Gibbons, 2006) as a useful way to explore how the literature discussions are structured to use increasingly more literate-like talk, which is more discursive, within this high-intermediate level young adult ESL reading classroom.

Classroom Discourse Patterns

The literature on classroom discourse is extensive and, within the context of this study, focuses largely on research on discourse patterns in classrooms. Discourse patterns can be a good indicator of how knowledge, language and instruction are perceived and constructed by teachers and students in the classrooms.

Many researchers have pointed to the roles that the patterns of the classroom play in the kinds of opportunities that are created for students to engage with one another through activity. Sinclair and Coulter’s (1975) study and the subsequent works of Mehan (1979) and Cazden (1986) have illuminated the dominant role of the teacher in discourse patterns in classrooms. These researchers have described the traditional discourse pattern of classroom talk as the teacher initiation, student response, teacher evaluation/feedback (IRE/F) sequence. The IRE pattern has been labeled as a “monologic discourse pattern” (Alexander, 2006) by which teachers initiate the interaction, most frequently by posing a question to which students are expected to respond. Teachers then

evaluate or provide feedback regarding students' responses. Under this model, lecture and recitation scripts are typically used as the principal tools of teaching a fixed, static understanding of knowledge, and a transmission model of learning is assumed (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Nystrand, 1997).

In second language classrooms, the IRE discourse pattern can provide scaffolds to encourage structured one-word or limited participation in the target language. IRE directs students into short, paradigmatic utterances that consist of reciting known information (Mosenthal, 1984) or choppy, tentative utterances (Gutierrez, 1994; Nystrand, 1997). However, SLA researchers assert that when this pattern pervades second language classrooms, it provides few opportunities for developing communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) in the target language. For talk to build communicative competence, the learner needs to do more than supply one-word answers in the target language.

Recent studies within the field of SLA have explored how two types of final moves by teachers, e.g., the evaluation and feedback moves, can affect the roles of teacher and student in the classroom. Hall and Walsh (2002) stated that in the final move sequence the teacher plays the role of expert. They concluded that a brief evaluative move leaves the teacher in control of the discourse and constrains students' learning opportunities. Similarly, van Lier (2000) focused on the final move and proposed that when this move includes actual feedback rather than a simple evaluation, students are more likely to participate independently in classroom discussions. Waring (2008) also explored how positive evaluations, in particular (e.g., "very good" or "that's correct"), can serve to close the conversational sequence, effectively shutting down further student discourse.

On the other hand, a series of studies have established that the IRE/F sequence does not have to be monologic. Wells (1993) proposed that if the final move were used to extend the student's answer or to make connections with other responses, this sequence could be developed into a genuine dialogic co-construction of meaning. Nystrand (1997) reported that by using high-level evaluation, the teacher not only acknowledged the importance of student responses but also challenged students to further their thinking, offered space for student-generated thoughts and provided effective assistance in transforming their understanding. He concluded that high-level evaluation was one of the dialogic bids which could be used to ignite discussion and enhance the length of student contributions. Nassaji and Wells (2000) argue that when the teacher dominates the final move by evaluation, he or she suppresses students' participation. Conversely, when the teacher avoids evaluation and instead requests justifications, connections or counter-arguments and allows students to self-select in making their contributions, he or she promotes student participation and offers students more opportunities for learning.

In contrast to the IRE pattern, researchers have advocated for an alternative way of interaction: a "dialogic discourse pattern" in which students interact more freely with one another within a more egalitarian authority structure (Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1997; Wells, 1999). In a dialogic classroom, meanings and decisions are shared among the participants via discussion rather than dictated by the teacher. This approach reflects a constructivist conception of education that construes learning as an interpretive, recursive, building process by active learners interacting with the physical and social world. From this perspective, knowledge is viewed as neither fixed nor contained only as propositional objects in individual minds (Wells, 1999). Rather, knowledge emerges as it is constructed and reconstructed between participants in

specific situated activities in which the participants use the cultural artifacts at their disposal as they work towards the collaborative achievement of a goal (Wells, 1999, p. 140).

From this dialogical perspective, Nystrand (1997) argues that reading and talking about text are no different than other classroom activities. Instead, these two activities are a meaning-making process by which students not only discover the meaning of the text but also interpret it based on their own personal experience, understandings and expectations. In dialogically oriented instruction, emphasis is placed on the response of the students. Students are active and significant contributors to classroom discourse together with the teacher (Nystrand, 1997). Consequently, the discourse within these classrooms is less conventional and repeatable because it is jointly constructed, and the floor is open to student contributions. In these classrooms, both teachers and students pick up on, elaborate upon, and question what others say (Nystrand, 1991). The transmissional purpose is abandoned, and active responsiveness and the interanimation of voices (Bakhtin, 1981; Wertsch, 1991) are created as students react to the text from a different perspective by adding their own meanings, interpretations and ideas. Bakhtin (1981) wrote that “Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and another’s word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (p. 354). From this view, meaning is not encoded and decoded by students. Rather, students construct meaning as well as roles, voices, etcetera and establish procedures throughout the dialogic activity.

This dialogical perspective is of particular relevance when dealing with ESL students. Research indicates that if the discourse focus is on exploring and negotiating meaning, the target language becomes the vehicle for communicating ideas. The

classroom is then created as an environment in which students are encouraged to articulate their own thinking, often in extended conversations (Boyd, 2011). In addition, it is argued that extended discourse can provide opportunities for students to develop and practice elements of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) in the target language (Boyd & Rubin, 2002, 2006). Comprehension can also be enhanced when new information is related to personal experience, especially when students do this in their own words (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

Generally, language classrooms — and more particularly, activities or tasks comprising specific classroom environments — are considered important sites of learning and development. Research has demonstrated how teachers can foster classroom conditions that encourage or restrict successful student participation (Bruner, 1986; Ernst, 1994; Mehan, 1979; Nystrand, 1997). A body of research on classroom discourse has examined what constitutes good teaching across the curriculum and which classroom conditions are engendered and arise from such teaching. Studies assert that dialogic inquiry and instruction are crucial (Alexander, 2006; Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 2001) to encourage exploratory talk in the classroom (Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008). There is both room for student elaboration and exchanges as they take turns and shape the scope of the talk (Soter et al., 2008), and authentic teacher questions (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991) are crucial for quality talk as these can lead to more elaborated student utterances.

The dialogic and interactive nature of instruction also posits that participation is both the goal as well as the means of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996). Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning as a process through which newcomers proceed from “legitimate peripheral participation” to full participation in a

community of practice. For Rogoff et al. (1996), learning and development entail transformation of participation. During this process, students develop understandings of the practices, negotiate roles and responsibilities in those practices, and engage in guided performance as their participation is mediated by the more knowledgeable others and the tools developed culturally and historically by that community. Where Vygotsky's notions of internalization emphasize outcomes within the learner, framing the teaching and learning process as a transformation of participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 1996) emphasizes learning as it is displayed within a wider social arena. The practical implication from this view is that students must receive support and scaffolds as they gradually move toward full participation and independent control of those practices. As students learn to participate in literature discussions, they need opportunities to practice new ways of talking and thinking about books.

Nature of Student Talk in Classrooms

Research commonly recognizes that student talk should be encouraged in classrooms (e.g., Cazden, 2001; Nystrand, 2006; Wells, 1999). Promoting student talk is also an explicit instructional objective in any second language classroom. Talk in the target language is both a process for learning content and expressing ideas as well as the sought-after learning product (Boyd & Maloof, 2000). Research in mainstream classroom contexts argues that extended time "on the floor" in student-centered exchanges, exploratory talk and elaborated utterances promotes communicative competence, individual reasoning, shared understanding and knowledge, substantive engagement and high-level comprehension (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran, 2003; Hymes, 1971;

Mercer, Wegerif, & Dawes, 1999; Murphy, Wilkinson, & Soter, 2011; Nystrand, 1997, 2006; Resnick, 2010). For ESL students, student talk plays a critical role in providing practice in, awareness of, and immediate feedback in using the target language. If their talk is limited to recitation, then ESL students do not experience the varied participant roles needed to communicate. Talk confined to social interactions is equally limiting, as ESL students do not then acquire the elaborated code of schooling and associated ways of thinking.

In the field of SLA, concerns with the communicative language teaching in ESL classrooms have been validated by the *Communicative Approach*, developed in the 1970s, with its emphasis on communicative competence and the authentic use of language in the target culture (Hymes, 1971; Ommagio, 1986). The claim in this approach is based on the premise that the goal of language teaching is communication with native speakers in natural, everyday situations. Communicative ability is seen as linked to “the contextualized performance and interpretation of socially appropriate illocutionary acts in discourse” (Bachman, 1992, p. 252). Emphasis is given to experiential language, which is close to the everyday experience of learners.

Wallace (2003) challenges the concern with orality in *Communicative Approach*. Her argument is that there is a relative neglect of the quality of talk or more discursive, elaborated forms of talk in the communicative approach. According to Wallace, this is the kind of talk that is exploratory in Mercer’s (1995) terms, i.e., talk through which participants engage critically but constructively with each other’s ideas (Mercer, 1995), as opposed to the spontaneous and fluent speech that tends to be favored in second and foreign language classrooms.

Mercer (1995, 2002) draws on the term “educated discourse” to describe a kind of talk, presupposing that schooling involves a socialization into language practices that are different from everyday talk. Wallace (2003) uses the term “literate English,” which can be seen as opposed to day-to-day survival English. Quality talk of this kind has been described in various studies as real talk (Boyd, 2011); elaborated, extended talk (Boyd & Rubin, 2002, 2006); literate talk (Chang & Wells, 1988, Gibbons, 2006); elaborated forms of talk (Wallace, 2003); and the extended stretch of talk exchanges, all of which are a result of co-construction among participants but are less commonly sustained by ESL students in classroom interaction. This talk is often messy, hesitant, recursive, incomplete and choppy as talk participants strive for coherence and fluency. It is talk that is meaningful, exploratory and engaged. It is talk that spans a range of functions well beyond the informative, talk that positions students as primary knowers (Berry, 1981) and talk that is truly dialogic (Boyd, 2011).

Mercer (1996), however, argues that a clear structure of ground rules needs to be provided in order to prepare students to engage in such talk that is exploratory in classrooms and that students need support in developing the skills necessary for such collaboration in order that the resultant talk can be portrayed as a ‘social mode of thinking (p. 374).

Narrative and reading response theorists claim (Bruner, 1986; Rosenblatt, 1978) and empirical studies confirm (Gambrell & Almassi, 1996, Langer, 1995; Wells, 1990) that talk about and around texts can generate quality talk by introducing substantive issues through text and encouraging students to relate them to their experiences and perspectives (Boyd & Maloof, 2000). Much first-language research has focused on small group discussion and the role the teacher plays in promoting student talk (Almassi, 1995;

Eeds & Wells, 1989; Maloch, 2002). However, the act of establishing small groups does not preclude the presence of meaningful interactions. It is argued that teachers can foster classroom conditions that encourage or restrict types of student talk because they regulate opportunities for and accept types of student talk.

In a similar view, second language research on literature-based instruction has examined meaning-focused interactions and self-initiated participation in the ESL classroom (Johnson, 1995) as well as a broad range of interactional and conversational roles and relationships that helped students to construct extended oral and written texts (Ernst, 1994; Gutierrez, 1994). Boyd and Maloof (2000) and Boyd and Rubin (2002, 2006), in particular, have focused on the interactional roles and strategies the teacher adopts in facilitating extended discourse in the ESL classroom. They assert that language learning is not so much tied to the structure of a classroom activity (e.g., a pattern of discourse sequence such as IRE or the size of student groups) — although particular structures predispose students to particular types of talk — but rather is tied to the participant roles enacted by both the teacher and the students (Boyd & Maloof, 2000, p. 142). Their claim is that students also need to act as, for example, clarifiers, affirmers, questioners, reflectors and responders as opposed to performing the static role of responding to the teacher recall and display questions. With this in mind, the present dissertation examines the nature of talk and interaction that occurred between the teacher and students and among students, the roles or positions the teacher and students played in the interaction, and the kinds of contexts and opportunities for second language development that were constructed.

Use of literature in Second Language Classrooms

Literature discussions have been explored in multiple classroom settings. Researchers in mainstream classroom contexts have claimed a variety of benefits for encouraging responses to literature and having literature discussions, such as enhanced comprehension, enjoyment and cognitive development (Farnan, 1986); an overall increase in student motivation for reading (Jewell & Pratt, 1999); more active emotional involvement (Monson, 1986); and greater appreciation of literature (Dugan, 1997; Lehman & Sharer, 1996).

A number of studies that deal with the use of literature in second and foreign language classroom settings have also described multiple aspects of literature discussions and their benefits for learning. Researchers such as Kramsch (1985, 1993), Lazar (1993), Schofer (1990), and Thomas and Parkinson (2000) discussed how literary texts can be incorporated into language classrooms and the ways in which literature helps to improve students' communicative development and linguistic and cultural awareness. These studies further suggested certain instructional strategies for the incorporation of literary texts to improve the oral skills of students in language classrooms. In these works, they focused on class discussion based on texts (Berg, 1990), interpretive role-playing (Kramsch, 1985), and critical discussion or debate (Lazar, 1993) that involves the use of oral skills.

In a similar vein, Martin (1993) offers some strategies such as the types of questions that should be asked and the ways in which the interaction in literature classrooms should be represented. However, some studies have tracked L2 readers' linguistic and cultural limitations in constructing an understanding and producing a critical response to literary texts (Bernhardt, 1990; Carrell, 1983; Davis, 1992; Duff,

2001). This research asserts that the lack of cultural and historical knowledge about the target culture or insufficient target language competence hindered students' literary experiences.

On the other hand, researchers such as Donato and Brooks (2004), Mantero (2001), Skidmore (2000) and Weist (2004) explored the nature of literature discussions in foreign language literature classes. These studies indicate that the recitation script is prevalent in these settings and that students are not engaged in communicative exchanges. Other studies also examined the influence of different types of discourse on the participation of ELL (English Language Learners) students and the role of the teacher in this discourse (Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 2003; Gutierrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995). These studies found that scripted and triadic discourse employed in classrooms ignores the diverse cultural and linguistic experiences of the students and significantly constrains ELL student participation.

In their study highlighting one teacher's implementation of literature discussions, Carrison and Ernst-Slavit (2005) showed that ELL students not only effectively participated in book discussions but also benefited greatly from these discussions. The benefits included improved oral communication, which was carried over to other content areas, a better attitude toward reading and improved reading comprehension. Brock (1997) explored the use of literature discussions with second language learners in mainstream classrooms. She focused on why and how literature discussions serve as an important context for helping ELL students to learn to make meaning in English. Additionally, her study illustrated the importance of the teacher's ability to monitor the interactional context as well as to adjust the activities and discourses in accordance with ELL students' understandings.

Several studies (Ali, 1994; Boyd & Maloof, 2000; Chu, 2008; Kim, 2004) investigated literary discussion in the ESL classroom contexts. Ali (1994) attempted to incorporate reader response approaches into the Malaysian English literature class and recounted that using a literature circle successfully offered a “no threat environment” in the classroom. Boyd and Maloof (2000), through the analysis of a 90-minute literature discussion by nine ESL university students, revealed the types of intertextual connections these students made between the text and their experiences and the ways in which the teacher incorporated these connections into the classroom discussion. Chu (2008), in her study of adult students’ literary responses in an ESL reading class, demonstrated students’ strategies in constructing textual meaning and transformation of their meaning-making strategies across time. Advocating for the necessity of in-depth descriptions of discussion in literature-based ESL classes, Kim (2004) qualitatively described adult ESL classroom conversation about a novel written in English.

Many researchers and teachers have also explored the factors that may have an effect on the success of literature discussions. These factors include selection of an appropriate textbook that is interesting and slightly beyond the readers’ current level of language proficiency (Ibsen, 1990; Murdoch, 1992; Schulz, 1981); the use of open-ended questions about the stories (Britton, 1979; Saul, 1995); and the teacher’s role (Boyd & Maloof, 2000; Dugan, 1997; Jewell & Pratt, 1999; Lehman & Scharer, 1996; Yoon, 2008). Yoon (2008) also found that teachers’ understandings of the cultural and social needs of students influenced student interaction processes. She argued that the disposition and beliefs of the individual teacher were strong influences on the social positioning of ELL students in the classroom.

In summary, in dealing with the use of literature in both mainstream and second or foreign language classroom settings, there exist multiple perspectives for the benefits of learning and objectives of instruction. Classroom-based studies claim that literature can generate quality talk by introducing substantive issues and encouraging students to negotiate meanings (Boyd & Maloof, 2000; Gambrell & Almassi, 1996). Especially for second language learners, quality talk is believed to be of great value in their language development in that they acquire the target language through the process of communication (Lantolf, 1994; Pica, 1987, 1991; Porter, 1986; Swain, 1995). Further, from a pedagogic perspective, multiple interpretations allow for creative and critical thinking to take place in an atmosphere in which the teacher and students work together to create a safe and supportive classroom learning environment.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I discussed the theoretical perspectives that frame this study and reviewed the previous work that focuses on the use of literature in first and second language classroom settings. This study was developed to explore classroom talk shaped by literature in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom in a university-affiliated ELP program. The review of the existing literature enabled me to develop an understanding of the social aspects of learning, discourse patterns in language classrooms, and the nature of classroom talk in the classroom.

The existing body of research on reading response and classroom discourse approaches to literature discussions contributed to building the foundation for this study and to analyzing findings from the particular sociocultural context under study. Although several studies describing the use of literature involving ESL students suggested multiple

aspects of literature discussions and their benefits for learning (e.g., Ali, 1994; Boyd & Maloof, 2000, Chu, 2008; Kim, 2004), we, overall, have a very limited understanding of what is actually happening in text-based ESL classroom discussions. In the next chapter, I provide details of the procedures of the study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The present chapter examines the qualitative methodology for investigating young adult ESL students' participation in discussions of literature in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom at a university-affiliated ELP program. Included in the chapter are the research rationale, descriptions of the research site and the participants, and the researcher's positionality. Subsequently, the data collection and analysis procedures are described along with a discussion of the framework for analysis. Finally, this chapter concludes by addressing the trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

Rationale for Research Design

As in any study, the research focus, in this case, ESL students' participation in discussions of literature, informed the design of this study and the methods utilized in the research process. Simon and Dippo (1986), cited by Gibbons (2006), emphasized the importance of the theoretical orientation of a study by contending that "the methodological approach taken and the procedures and methods used are implicitly or explicitly informed by the theories and assumptions held by the researcher" (p. 80).

With respect to its theoretical framework, this study was informed by social, cultural and historical perspectives about the socioculturally mediated nature of human learning and development (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978/1986) proposed learning as a socially situated activity, arguing that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. In this view, language is fundamental to thinking, and it is through talk with others that one can reach higher mental functioning. In my analysis of

the interactions in an ESL classroom, I adopted the view that learning interacts dynamically with the sociocultural contexts in which it occurs and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from its situational and cultural contexts. In terms of the theoretical orientations to the literature discussions in this specific ESL reading and discussion class, my guiding assumption was that ESL students bring different cultural, institutional and historical backgrounds to their second language classroom. The literature discussions were understood to be situated within an interpretive community of the classroom, in which the students “read not as individuals but as members of a more or less readily identifiable social group” (Wallace, 2003, p. 93). In line with this perspective, I viewed learning or learning to talk as a process of the transformation of guided participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996).

Methodologically, my interest in understanding ESL students’ participation in discussions of literature led me to adopt an interpretive stance (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Erickson, 1986) with which to examine their talk, interaction and discourse over the course of a nine-week period. This study was qualitative in its design and method. An iterative process was used to generate ethnographic data by employing various data gathering tools. The term ethnography as applied to this study refers to a range of diverse and ever-changing research approaches characterized by first-hand, naturalistic and sustained observation and participation in a particular social setting (Harklau, 2005). This study dealt with an ESL classroom at a university-affiliated ESL program and, as a smaller unit within the setting, focused on ESL students’ participation in discussions of literature. The ESL classroom was chosen as the most appropriate context in which to conduct the research given the assumptions and beliefs about the nature of language and learning, approaches to teaching and learning, and the opportunities for talk and

interaction that these teaching approaches generate, all of which helped to determine what was viewed as significant in the analysis of the data. In the process, ethnographic, discourse analytic and qualitative research traditions were applied to the data to analyze the lessons and activity structures at both the macro and micro levels of interaction within the context of literature discussion in this ESL classroom.

This inquiry was further influenced by certain epistemological and methodological stances situated within a constructivist paradigm (Hatch, 2002). This paradigm holds the view that multiple realities are constructed and that the researcher and participants co-construct the reality the inquiry seeks to uncover. My epistemological stance, the relationship between the known and the knower, holds that there is not one true objective reality to be discovered and participants are active in the construction of knowledge. The interactions of the participants were first uncovered and investigated for meaning, and then explored, analyzed and compared.

In the following section, I describe the classroom practices as a whole in this high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom under investigation. The notion of ‘whole’ or holistic has methodological implications for the study of classroom life, in that any single classroom event or activity must be considered within the context of others in order to identify the “embedded nature of ‘reading’ in other types of events” (Green & Meyer, 1991, cited by Flood, Lapp, Squire, & Jensen, 2003, p. 211). Thus, it is important to describe how the class was routinely organized and sequenced with a range of reading activities to promote language learning.

Setting

This study was conducted in a high-intermediate level ESL course as part of a college-affiliated program at a large U.S. university. This course took place over the course of the nine-week summer semester of 2010, which began the second week of June and ended the first week of August. The ESL Services at this university offered two kinds of programs: the Academic English Program (AEP) and the English Learning Program (ELP). Most students in the AEP program were in the process of applying to graduate programs in the United States or had been accepted to graduate programs for the following semester. The students in the ELP program, however, had more diverse learning goals such as improving communication skills, satisfying academic study requirements, pursuing job opportunities or learning for pleasure. While taking courses in Listening/Speaking, Writing, Grammar/Idioms and Reading/Discussion, most of the students were also taking a TOEFL elective provided by this program. At the time of this study, the ELP program offered seven levels of instruction during the summer semester, with Level 1 being the lowest. The ESL Services had a student population of 195 in 2010, which included students from Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Kazakhstan, Japan, Angola, China, Mexico, Taiwan, Brazil and others (field notes, June 12, 2010).

The class under investigation was the Reading 6 course in the ELP program, which was second highest level at the time. The Reading 6 class was classified as the high-intermediate level in this institute. The levels were established by program administrators in accordance with students' scores on the internal ESL program proficiency test. The ELP Reading 6 class met twice per week on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for two and a half hours per session. Students in this class therefore met for a total of 45 hours during the nine-week summer semester. The stated objectives for the

class were based on reading and discussion, which involved the development of students' vocabulary, reading strategies, speed reading abilities and discussion skills.

The course materials for this class consisted of the skill-based textbook *Advanced Reading Power*, one 300-page novel, timed readings with an SRA reading kit, newspapers, an English dictionary, authentic reading materials selected by students or the teacher and various supplements. Other supplemental activities could be added to the basic components by individual teachers; however, they could not replace the components. The weekly schedule for this class was organized to include literature discussions, timed readings, textbook assignments, vocabulary and supplemental materials on Tuesdays, and textbook assignments, timed readings, newspapers, quizzes and supplemental materials on Thursdays (institute administrator, personal communication, June 12, 2010; class instructor, formal interview, August, 3, 2010). In this way, the students were exposed to a range of different kinds of texts including textbooks, novels, stories, advertisements, newspaper articles, cartoons, poems, journals, songs, magazines, etc., all of which then formed the basis of student dialogue both as a whole class and in small groups. The classroom events or activities consisted of a mixture of teacher-led episodes, group work and individual student activities. In the present study, literature discussions, in particular, were chosen as the research focus as they provided a lens through which to view how literature was used as a springboard for engaged, elaborated classroom talk in the classroom.

PROCESS OF PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND CONSENT

The participants of this study consisted of twelve young adult ESL students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their instructor, who was a white American female. The study was conducted in a high-intermediate level reading and discussion class in a university-affiliated ELP program.

Studies on ‘quality’ discussions (e.g., Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran, 2003; Chang-Wells & Wells, 1993; Mercer, 1995, 2000; Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser & Long, 2003; Soter, Wilkinson, Murphy & Rudge, 2004, to name a few) indicate that the most productive discussions are both structured and focused and occur in the following contexts: when students hold the floor for extended periods of time, when students are prompted to discuss texts through open-ended or authentic questions and when discussion incorporates a high degree of uptake (Wilkinson, Soter & Murphy, 2007, 2009). Inspired by these parameters on the quality of talk about text, I looked for a teacher who organized the class by allowing significant time for literature discussions and group work with the goal of unpacking how classroom structures come to shape different opportunities for participation. Because the implementation of literature discussions is not an uncommon curriculum domain of ESL programs in the U.S., I saw it as a context for students to use more extended, context-reduced language, which represents the main focus of my research. I established criteria for purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2005). In other words, in choosing the specific class and teacher to use in my study, I considered the following factors: (1) the amount of class time that was allotted for literature discussions, (2) the ways in which literature discussions were structured and focused, and (3) whether and how the teacher valued students’ cooperation and responsibility for their own learning (Mercer, 2000).

I approached the director of the institute at the university in question and was introduced to numerous teachers of intermediate-level reading and discussion classes. I visited the classes periodically during the 2009-2010 school year, and these observations served as a pilot study for the present dissertation. The teachers at the institute followed the program curriculum for the literature discussions that formed the basis of this study, although the way they structured these discussions varied from class to class. In these classrooms, the literature discussions consisted of the reading of one novel of the students' choosing. The discussions of the novel lasted approximately 20 to 60 minutes per session for eight of the nine weeks in the semester. As part of the course curriculum, the reading assignments were completed as homework assignments in preparation for the discussions and then socially shared and negotiated in the classroom community. These individual and group reading activities reflected the major goal of the course, which was to develop student engagement with texts.

After observing the individual teachers and their literature discussions, I chose to work with Ms. Brown (pseudonym) owing to her stated interest in participating in this study and her commitment to the literacy curriculum in the ESL classroom setting. Her class met my selection criteria with regard to literature discussions. In organizing the literature discussions as a literacy curriculum, she designated approximately 60 to 80 minutes per session, although the exact length of each session varied according to the group dynamics, the preparation time for discussion and the schedule of other class activities for the day. During the literature discussion sessions, students were given enough time in class to share and develop their own understanding of the text based on the discussion questions they raised. The teacher modeled and practiced how to productively interact and discuss with others and progressively engaged her students in

group process techniques such as forming good discussion questions, responding to the text, taking turns, sharing roles equitably and assuming group responsibilities. Most students were quite fluent in English, although reading and discussing a novel was challenging for them. At the time, a majority of the students had no background in English literature discussions in their EFL contexts of learning.

After obtaining Ms. Brown's signed consent form to participate in the study (see Appendix A), she and I discussed the research goals and procedures with respect to the consent forms and data collection prior to the beginning of the course. With her approval, I was then introduced to her students on the first day of class, and I spoke with her students about my study and answered their questions and concerns. They were informed that I was interested in finding out how ESL students learn a second language and, in particular, what helps them to learn English. I sought consent for student participation from all students in the classroom (see Appendix A). All the students were over eighteen years old at the onset of the data collection except for one. For this under-aged student, I prepared one parent package that included parent consent and student assent forms (see Appendix B). This package did not need to be translated because the minor's parent could read English. I mailed the package to the parent and asked him to sign the consent form and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. All students were informed of and agreed to the procedures for collecting, validating and reporting data. Signed parent and student consent forms were obtained for all students in the course. The teacher and students were also clearly notified that all the data collected from the field would be kept confidential and that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities.

ESL STUDENTS

Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom consisted of twelve ESL students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. There were eight male and four female young adult learners between the ages of 17 and 25. The students were from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds including Arabic (2), Kazakh (4), Korean (2), Portuguese (3) and Spanish (1), and had an average of 7.3 years of previous English study (ranging from 1 to 10 years). The majority of the students had recently arrived in the country with an average length of residence of 5.5 months (ranging from 2 to 9 months) at the time of the data collection. The class makeup was typical of many university-affiliated intensive ESL programs in the U.S. Of the twelve students, eleven were enrolled in the full-time ELP intensive program (listening/speaking, writing, grammar/idioms, reading/discussion), and one was enrolled in the part-time ELP program (writing, reading/discussion).

Like most second language classes, this class was multilevel (Bell, 1991). According to the biographic information provided by the institute, twelve students registered for Ms. Brown's reading class during the summer semester, which was the second highest level at the institute at the time of data gathering, but they were placed for the Listening/Speaking, Writing and Grammar/Idioms courses at levels 4 to 7. By observing each of the students participating in the classroom activities, I could see some degree of differences in those areas in terms of their English proficiency levels.

The ESL students came to the class with relatively similar educational backgrounds and academic goals. They were mostly college students from all over the world who wanted to improve their English for academic or occupational reasons. During the first class session, the students were asked to explain on the initial background questionnaire (see Appendix C) their reasons for wanting to improve their English and

what they hoped to learn in this ESL program. The majority noted a desire to improve their English language skills because they planned to enter a university in the U.S. As such, many emphasized a need for improved conversation skills and good scores on the TOEFL test as a primary motivation for enrollment. Others stated that they enrolled in the course because they wanted to improve their employment opportunities in their home countries, increase their knowledge of American culture and make new friends in the target language community.

At the time of the data collection, all the students except for two were attending their second or third summer semester at the institute, so a majority of them were familiar with the curriculum procedures and expected ways of working and behaving in the class. Ms. Brown described the students in this classroom as very passionate and attentive with high motivations for learning, meaning that they engaged enthusiastically and collaboratively with activities and tasks. Ten of the twelve students had received scholarships from their governments or from a company in their home country. The students were relatively fluent in English, but they had little or no previous experience discussing English literature with other students in this ESL program. Thus, they considered the literature discussions to be challenging. The demographic information for the twelve student participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 3.1: Demographic Profiles of Twelve Student Participants

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Native Language	Educational Backgrounds	ESL Learning/ Academic Goals	Class Attendance
1	Aziz	M	20	Kuwait	Arabic	Engineering	Entering a university in the U.S.	83%
2	Duckjin	M	25	South Korea	Korean	Business	Learning English for a job opportunity	50%
3	Erzhan	M	19	Kazakhstan	Kazakh	Tele-communications	Entering a university in the U.S.	100%
4	Jorge	M	18	Peru	Spanish	Engineering	Entering a university in the U.S.	100%
5	Nazer	M	19	Kazakhstan	Kazakh	Tele-communications	Entering a university in the U.S.	100%
6	Davi	M	25	Brazil	Portuguese	Journalism	Learning English for a job opportunity	100%
7	Ahmad	M	17	Saudi Arabia	Arabic	Mechanical Engineering	Entering a university in the U.S.	89%
8	Steve	M	19	Angola	Portuguese	Petroleum Engineering	Entering a university in the U.S.	94%
9	Auken	F	22	Kazakhstan	Kazakh	Physics	Entering a university in the U.S.	94%
10	Mariam	F	20	Kazakhstan	Kazakh	Oil and Gas Engineering	Entering a university in the U.S.	100%
11	Nia	F	19	Angola	Portuguese	Computer Engineering	Entering a university in the U.S.	94%
12	Minji	F	20	South Korea	Korean	English Education	Learning English for pleasure	17%

MS. BROWN

The teacher in this study, Ms. Brown (pseudonym), had many years of experience in teaching writing composition at the college level prior to ESL instruction and held a Ph.D. in English. Ms. Brown was middle-aged. Her ethnic background was European American, and she was monolingual in English. At the time of the data collection, she had been teaching ESL grammar, reading and writing classes at the institute in question for 10 years. She was familiar with issues of language learning and learner needs in ESL education and had a deep commitment to meeting students' needs as ESL learners and maintaining a level of rigor in the program curriculum. Furthermore, Ms. Brown had a well-developed theory of reading and discussion in general and was specifically concerned with ensuring that ESL students were gaining access to opportunities to participate in "productive and meaningful conversations" (e.g., Eeds & Wells, 1989; Mercer, 1995; Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1999). This orientation can be seen in the transcripts of Ms. Brown's interviews and informal conversations, specifically when she shares her beliefs about classroom talk about text and her role in facilitating meaningful interactions:

So let's take, for example, "Dance Hall of the Dead" as an example of the rhetorical triangle. But this novel exists as a novel with ideas in it. It's a novel about how cultures can either be permeable or impermeable. How the culture can seal itself off and say, "We will not incept with another culture" or the culture can be open. So the Zuni and Navajo represent two different cultural approaches. It was created by a writer who's in a society and a culture. And the readers picked it up, and I hope they'll go away thinking about "Well, what's happening in my society?" Let's take the Muslims in this ESL reading classroom. We have two. If I say what it means to you, they have many things to pick up for conversation. (Ms. Brown, formal interview, August 3, 2010)

This quote represents Ms. Brown's theoretical orientation towards talk about literature in her classroom. She frequently maintained that reading is a three-way interaction between the writer, the text, and the reader, all of which are socially situated and constructed. Ms Brown's view of knowledge as socially constructed also permeated her view of literature discussions in this high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom. Through both her statements in interviews and her teaching practices, Ms. Brown indicated that, instead of looking for one correct interpretation of literary works, she held a stance of openness to different perspectives and interpretations of texts. She believed that new meanings are created with the exploration of ideas and opinions within a classroom community.

Ms. Brown was well respected at the institute by teachers and students alike and was perceived as a popular and committed reading instructor. She was personally known to me before I invited her to take part in my dissertation study. I had visited several classes at the institute for my own class projects as a doctoral student, and Ms. Brown's class was one of them. I observed how she implemented and structured the literature discussions in her classroom over the course of several semesters. Ms. Brown and I discussed the use of literature discussions as a foundation of the literacy curriculum in the ESL classroom setting. These conversations led us to form a professional relationship that grew throughout the study. Owing to this relationship, we were at ease with each other in the classroom.

Additionally, Ms. Brown was an important participant in the research. She had read the research proposal and was familiar with the research questions. She was also aware that I was interested in the role of classroom discourse in second language learning and use. During the data-gathering period she was not merely a passive informant or data provider, but actively helped me to collect data. She often asked her students to arrange

the seating to facilitate my audio recordings of their conversations when moving from one class activity to another. The collaboration between teacher and researcher, as well as the genuine interest of the teacher in the research project, resulted in additional triangulation.

Data Collection Procedures

The data used for this qualitative study were gathered from a high-intermediate level ESL reading class in a college-affiliated ELP program with a specific focus on students' participation in discussions of literature. Data gathering relied on multiple collection methods and techniques to allow for triangulation (Marshall, 2000) and to obtain trust (Bogdan, 2007).

The primary sources of data consisted of audio and video recordings of classroom talk, the transcriptions of those recordings, formal and informal interviews with the teacher and the students, classroom observations, extensive field notes and artifacts from the field (Silverman, 2001). I kept the structure of data collection as open as possible in order to be sensitive to emerging themes and ideas (Erickson, 1998; Strauss, 1991). As a result, I approached the data collection with a specific focus, in this case, literature discussions in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom, but maintained a loose set of research questions relating to issues that I thought would be relevant to the study.

The data can be regarded as natural because the researcher did not intervene in the actions and decisions of the study participants. Specifically, audio recordings enabled me to listen to the focused episodes multiple times. However, there are also limitations to understanding certain details of the classroom interactions, particularly in terms of non-verbal communication, and for this reason video recording was included during the last

four weeks of the course. In the meantime, I often spoke informally with the teacher and students to learn their perspectives on what was happening at particular times in class. I also administered background questionnaires (see Appendix C), interviewed the teacher and students (see Appendix D) and collected teacher resources and student artifacts (for an example, see Appendix E).

Additional data were collected after the summer semester had ended, and these were used discursively (Erickson, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to both direct the research and inform the analysis. For example, I conducted interviews with the teacher and some of the students to determine whether I had interpreted their behaviors appropriately in classroom activities at particular times and to ascertain what the participants thought about the activities in the classroom. In the following section, I detail my data collection techniques and sources, which include participation observations, field notes, audio and video recordings, formal and informal interviews, and artifacts.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

At the onset of the data collection, I conducted classroom observations for two and a half hours two days per week throughout the course of the summer semester. While observing, my position as a researcher in the classroom shifted according to the classroom situations. Prior to the data collection, Ms. Brown and I reached an agreement that while I was in the classroom, I would not assume the role of a teacher. I also typically refrained from participating in the conversations. Accordingly, I functioned as a non-participant observer when the teacher was teaching. The class was normally arranged in a horseshoe shape, and I was seated beside the students while I observed, took notes, and audiotaped and videotaped activities. When the students moved their seats to work in

small groups, I walked around and watched them work. However, I positioned myself as a more of a participatory observer when the teacher or the students asked for help while still retaining the distance of a researcher. In other words, I tried to balance my research role as a passive participant observer and a moderate participant observer (Spradley, 1980) according to the various situations and requests of the teacher or the students.

The observations were intended to record talk and interaction in activity both between the teacher and students and among the students without intervention on the part of the researcher. These observations took place throughout the study with special attention paid to the texts, actions and interactions of each participant as the contextual elements. The postings of discussion questions both by the teacher and the students on the online class community, Nicenet, were also examined as part of the observation process. The observations provided valuable insights regarding the overall nature and interactional patterns of Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom, which could not otherwise be obtained. Through these active observations I was able to capture a rich picture of the ways in which norms, assumptions and attitudes were being established as well as the ways in which patterns of participation and interaction were being formed in the classroom (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998).

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

Audio recording was chosen as a primary data source for several reasons. This study explores the ongoing sequences of interaction and accompanying discourse across lessons in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom. Markee (2000) noted that "various groups' intragroup conversations yield a babble of untranscribable noise" (p. 51) in the data collection process. By placing a voice recorder in the center of a group, I was able to

document the conversation of each group. In addition, digital voice recorders were easily transportable, allowing me greater flexibility in recording when students moved to different conversation groups in the classroom. Four Olympus digital voice recorders were used as a primary data collection instrument to record small group work as well as teacher-fronted whole-class conversations. Two additional recorders were further employed to tape conversations that transpired when students worked in pairs or individually. The students soon felt comfortable being observed and recorded by the researcher.

One of the difficulties of recording in this classroom was the inevitable background noise from other working groups that occurred owing to the small classroom size, which made it problematic to transcribe later in the analysis process. However, most of the talk could be heard sufficiently clearly for transcription. Immediately after leaving the site, I saved the recordings on a computer and identified the students who contributed to the conversations in the field notes.

During the last four weeks of observation, I chose to include video recordings in order to capture some non-verbal aspects of the discussions, which are part of the resources for meaning-making, such as participants' facial expressions, gestures, body positioning or glances. Considering the classroom size, I stationed only one digital video camera in the corner of the classroom. The camera position was often adjusted depending on the classroom activity, since the entire classroom could not be included at one time in the frame of the camera. The camera frame was focused to include the teacher and all the students. While the field notes helped to fill out what I saw or felt, video recordings provided another lens through which to interpret the contexts I observed. But for the most part, the four digital voice recorders documented the conversations of the teacher and students, and video recording was used to supplement my observations and analyses. This

decision was made because the video camera could not register the conversations when participants were engaged in pairs or groups. In this way, I conducted eighteen classroom observations in total, which resulted in the collection of approximately 75 hours of audio recordings of classroom practices that occurred in both small-group and whole-class interactions and 22 hours of video recordings of classroom practices during the second half of the class meetings.

Immediately after the observations, I transferred the recordings of each day to my computer. For the facilitation of data analysis, I made the summaries of the recordings in the field notes. For example, I kept a detailed log of each recording, including the time it was recorded, the types of interaction the teacher exhibited with her students, the participants involved in each group, the major contributors in discussions, the ways in which group dynamics were shaped by their social relations and so forth. These summaries were subsequently used for intensive listening and selective transcription during the data reviewing and analytic process.

FIELD NOTES

Field notes were also taken throughout the course of the study in order to present a rich picture of the whole context, particularly what occurred in and out of the classroom. When I conducted observations in class, I sat with the students and took notes about all classroom activities. After each observation, I expanded upon the field notes with the classroom observation schemes. I included detailed descriptions in the form of records of the following:

- (1) participants (e.g., class attendance, physical dispositions, attitude, mood, ways of talking and interacting);
- (2) teaching/learning activities and tasks and the amount of time spent on them;
- (3) types of classroom interaction (e.g., individual, small group, pair, or whole class); and
- (4) types of texts and resources and the modes of engagement around them.

Field notes were multimodal in form and included hyperlinked text from the online community, photographs and drawings of the classroom arrangements I observed. In addition, classroom observations were documented and archived in chronological order for situational information to accompany the transcripts, which helped to substantiate insights gained from the analysis. I further detailed any theoretical, methodological and personal comments about these observations (Bogdan, 2007; Cairney & Ruge, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These notes were reviewed periodically. Following the recommendations of Merriam (1988) and Miles & Huberman (1994), I kept a research journal to record my thoughts and reflections on my own positions and experiences that arose, many of which influenced me into subsequent decisions in the process of data collection and analyses.

ARTIFACTS

To contextualize the analysis of discourse, written documents were collected as artifacts for this study. These documents included copies of instructional materials (e.g., handouts, newspaper articles, pictures, photos, books, etc.) used in class, class schedules,

daily lesson plans, policy statements on ELP curriculum, samples of student work, instructor evaluations, final grades and attendance records, and so forth.

Texts and materials on the online community of the class, which were usually uploaded by the teacher, were also downloaded and archived for data analysis. These artifacts included discussion questions that the students posted for class assignments and online links that the teacher made for discussion materials. These artifacts reflected the cultural elements of the classroom and provided an additional source of data for the analysis of the contextual issues that shaped the classroom learning environments. All data sources from the research site helped to triangulate the interpretation.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were used to gain a sense of the teacher's and students' perceptions of classroom experiences and of their learning and teaching processes. Interviews took place during the break or after class on campus, and I informed all participants that everything they talked about would be confidential. With the consent of each participant, all interviews were audio-taped and saved. The background questionnaire was first administered to all students at the onset of data collection (see Appendix C), and semi-structured interviews were conducted toward the end of the summer course (see Appendix D). The background questionnaire served as an opportunity for me to learn about student participants' background information and their academic and language learning goals.

Toward the end of the data collection period, interviews with each student were conducted for approximately thirty minutes to one hour. The interviews built on the information collected from the questionnaire responses and were intended to piece

together participants' perceptions of the classroom activities and their learning process. I used semi-structured interviewing because I believe that ambiguities are resolved through the discourse itself and not by participant efforts to provide a more precise response to a specific question (Mishler, 1986), and because I feel that the relationship the researcher develops with participants influences the interviews (Creese, 2002). During interviews, I worked to provide space for students to elaborate on perspectives raised throughout the study and to share some of my understandings that emerged from the initial analysis. These one-to-one conversations in addition to email exchanges with student participants continued after I left the site, which allowed me to share my continuing description, interpretation and analysis with them.

Also, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Ms. Brown at the onset and at the end of the data collection period. Furthermore, I often had unstructured, informal conversations with her (Spradley, 1979) whenever I felt it necessary (for interview questions, see Appendix D). I met with her to talk through my observations of what was happening during an activity or event and to ask her perceptions of the students' responses as she worked alongside them in class. The conversations with Ms. Brown also continued after I left the research site. These formal and informal discussions were tape-recorded, and I used them as a basis for ongoing decision-making. This meant that I appreciated her input as the data triangulation in the initial interpretation. Teacher and student interviews were then transcribed selectively to give voice to the participants' perspectives on classroom practices, especially as these pertained to the discussions of literature in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom.

Issues in Transcription

A number of theorists have made the claim that transcription is an inherently theoretical process that is dependent on the theories the researcher holds and that influences the analysis and interpretation cycle (Du Bois, 1991; Duranti, 2007; Green, Franquiz & Dixon, 1997; Jaffe, 2000; Lapadat, 2000; Mischler, 1991; Mondada, 2007; Ochs, 1979). Transcription necessarily involves selection, and this selectivity is based in the knowledge, beliefs and interpretations of the researcher (Mishler, 1991). Transcription is considered to be a representational and interpretive process (Bucholtz, 2000; Green et al., 1997) in that researchers make choices about whether to transcribe, what to transcribe and how to represent the record in text (Kvale, 1996).

This study foregrounds ESL students' participation in literature discussions viewed from a sociocultural rather than a transmission-based perspective. As stated previously, the research methods of choice for approaching this qualitative study involved making observations as well as audio and video recordings of social and communicative interaction in a naturalistic classroom setting followed by transcription, coding and analysis procedures.

Bloom (1993) argues that the researcher is already making coding decisions through the transcription focus and conventions that he or she chooses. The secondary coding processes are both constrained by and further elaborate these initial choices. In the case of this study, the process of transcription and analysis was iterative and recursive in that the analysis took place and understandings were derived through the process of constructing transcripts by repeatedly listening to and viewing the recorded interactions (Psathas & Anderson, 1990). I transcribed the data entirely on my own. The choices I made about transcription constructed my own theory that emerged from the data.

The notational conventions used in the transcription were based on the symbols used by Jefferson in Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001). During the transcribing process, I simplified the notations for purposes of readability and clarity. While the transcription aimed for a faithful record of what was said, some idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g., stutters, micropauses, nonverbal and involuntary vocalizations) were removed (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). However, I occasionally noted some elements that were of special significance in terms of indicating interactive behaviors such as prolonged pauses or laughter. Because small-group interaction frequently involves turns with spontaneous interruption and overlaps, there were many occasions in which students intervened and latched between utterances in interacting with each other. These interrupted and overlapped turns, in addition to prolonged pauses or hesitations, were included to indicate the degree of engagement. In presenting the interview data, some of the discourse was omitted so that the transcription included only those elements of the discourse that were relevant to the discussion. It is important to note that each speaker turn is numbered, and the names of students are presented. While Ms. Brown is indicated by the letter T, SS indicates several students speaking at once. A detailed list of the notational conventions used in the transcription is presented in Appendix F.

In order to facilitate the transcription of recordings of talk, I used the IN-USB-2 Infinity transcription foot pedal in conjunction with Express Scribe software. Express Scribe is a free downloadable program for Windows that aids in the transcription of digitized sound files and offers special features to typists including variable speed playback, multi-channel control, file management and so forth. The transcripts of the data were organized in the order of the weeks that the recordings took place. Each lesson was labeled in chronological order (e.g., 1.1, 2.2, 3.2, 7.1 and so forth) and saved in a different document file. For example, Excerpt 3.1 indicates that the episode was taken

from the Tuesday class of week three, and Excerpt 5.2 from the Thursday class of week five.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was ongoing during the data collection period and afterward. It involved ethnographic methods (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998) that employed “uncontrolled observation and description” (Nunan, 2005, p. 231) to examine what was happening in the classroom. The entire unit of work on literature discussions in Ms. Brown’s ESL classroom involved four sessions of a pre-reading phase (30 to 75 minutes per session) and seven literature discussion sessions (70 to 80 minutes per session) that were carried out over nine weeks (for the structure of literature discussions, see Table 2). The majority of the analysis was centered on talk and interaction within this unit of work. The data were qualitatively analyzed, using a discourse-analytic approach (Hepburn & Potter, 2004; Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). Data analysis was an iterative and recursive process of application and refinement. It proceeded in two stages, which are described in the following sections.

FIRST STAGE OF THE ANALYSIS

Following the traditions of qualitative methods of data analysis, I first reviewed the field notes, interviews, artifacts, and audio and video recordings multiple times until themes and initial categories emerged. Subsequent rounds of data analysis resulted in a further revision of those themes and categories through the constant comparison method (Clarke, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2007).

This type of analysis required me to look at the classroom interactions both more broadly and at precise moments in time. More specifically, in the process of reviewing the data, I conceptualized two levels of activity (Wells, 1995; van Lier, 1996) in the classroom: the macro and the micro. The macro level of classroom interactions involved an examination of the ways in which the teacher initiated and assisted in activities with the necessary materials and resources through appropriate ordering, pacing and participation structures so that the students' engagements in these activities could be facilitated and extended. This level of reviewing provided a holistic perspective on the data and enabled me to look at how the teacher handled different stages of learning; for instance, the ways in which the various tasks and activities were introduced and maintained, whether and in which ways students' prior learning and knowledge were built on and connected to new learning, and whether and in which ways connections between various texts and activities were made across lessons as the class progressed.

Conversely, the micro level of classroom interactions involved a shift in focus to more moment-by-moment interactions between the teacher and students or among students in the classroom, either as a whole class or in groups or pairs, as the teacher supported their engagement with the activities and responded in ways that enabled their satisfactory completion of tasks (Wells, 1995, pp. 258-260). At this level, I was able to attend to specific strategies, processes and interaction structures that contributed to the joint construction of meaning through elaborated talk and actions among the students.

In line with these two levels of activity, I then began the data analysis process by making analytic memos on all of the field notes, which served as a starting point for theorizing about and making sense of what I had observed (Bogdan, 2007). During this initial analysis, particular themes and patterns emerged from reviewing the bulk of the classroom data. Among them, one theme that was significant in the data was that this

class followed relatively recurring, consistent sequences of teaching and learning processes, and they generated patterns of talk and interaction within the activity cycles. The initial analysis confirmed this theme because the activity cycles were consistent; the sequences worked as semiotic resources for the ESL students. This initial analysis provided me with an initial list of categories. The categories of classroom interactions that were identified included the following: patterns of interaction, types of talk, modes of engagement with texts, positions of the participants, cycles of activity and so forth.

SECOND STAGE OF THE ANALYSIS

In the second stage of the analysis, I devised a framework to help me code and analyze. I drew on observation framing schemes employed in previous classroom-based studies (e.g., Bernstein, 1999; Christie, 2002; Gibbons, 2006; Lemke, 1990; van Lier, 1996; Wells, 1995). I took the notion of “sequencing principles of discourse” (Gibbons, 2006, p. 123) as my organizing principle in examining the data as a whole and typifying — “not explaining causally” (Pacheco, 2010, p. 301) or quantifying — the micro-genetic structures of participation and discourse. I considered it a useful way of exploring the data to trace how the students engaged constructively with the text and others to develop an understanding of the text and the ways in which they achieved elaborated forms of talk over time in their classroom. These schemes captured in the form of records the following types of information:

- (1) sequences of teaching/learning activities and tasks,
- (2) patterns of participation and interaction,
- (3) types of talk,

- (4) positions of the participants, and
- (5) modes of engagement around and about texts.

These multi-layered ways of mapping allowed for the adequate reconstruction of classroom interactions. This type of representation highlighted the cycles of activity across lessons, along with the particular interactional structures. In brief, the focus on ongoing sequences of activities and tasks allowed specific items of data to be more fully contextualized and interpreted in the later chapters of the present study, and those processes of data analysis provided new understandings of what counted as reading in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom and, more importantly, of the opportunities the literature discussions offered for student learning.

UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis was an episode. The term "episode" as used in this study was employed by Lemke (1990), who applied it to a science classroom study, and by Gibbons (2006), who expanded its use into a content-based ESL classroom study. Lemke (1990), in his study of "talking science" (p. 50), describes the structure of a "lesson" as a whole in which it has a sequence of episodes, from starting to closing, and each episode has its own particular function or participant structure that is likely to change when a new episode starts. Linguistically, each new episode is marked by realizations of frames and markers; for example, "OK. Let's talk for a minute" (Ms. Brown, classroom conversation, June 10, 2010), "Now, what we are going to do is..." (Ms. Brown, classroom conversation, July 15, 2010), which signaled structural or functional changes in participation or activity and as a result, work to establish episode boundaries.

Functionally, episodes are correlated within one lesson, and there are intertextual relationships between the last episode of one lesson and the first episode of the next as a shared starting point. The patterning of the participation and interactional structures changes considerably from one lesson to the next in the class and from one class episode to another. Thus, an ‘episode’ in this study served as the basic unit for examination of the data.

The data presented in the later chapters of this dissertation represent typical occurrences of discourse from the episodes within the activity cycles. In the second stage of the analysis, the data were analyzed by means of discourse analysis (e.g., Hepburn & Potter, 2004; Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The teaching and learning processes in literature discussions were broken down into episodes. The episodes were observable and identifiable in that they were generally signaled by the frames and markers within the stages of the activity cycle. During this second analytic process, key episodes that represented the typical type of discourse in each stage were selected for subsequent transcription. The transcribed excerpts were then used for detailed discourse analysis of classroom interaction, along with the interpretations that were presented. The transcribed excerpts served as the primary data base. The discourse analysis that is introduced in the subsequent chapters of this study was based on these selected portions of the basic transcripts.

In the following chapters, I detail more closely the analytical moves utilized for answering each research question. Regarding the first research question, my focus was on the ongoing sequences of the teaching and learning activities in literature discussions that embedded the potential for generating elaborated, extended forms of talk in the interaction through which joint construction of meaning was established. A major part of the analysis involved an examination of how literature discussions in Ms. Brown’s ESL

classroom were carried out as the teacher and students negotiated their positions and relationships, which framed how they were expected to engage with text and others. These questions also explored the contextual issues that the teacher was dealing with in implementing literature discussions. Furthermore, I explored how the teacher and students were socially positioned in the classroom interactions. I was interested in their positioning because it influenced their interactions significantly. To conduct this analysis, I used Harré and Van Langenhove's (1991) notion of positioning.

Regarding the second research question, the focus of the analysis was on the students' elaborated and extended forms of talk in their construction of meaning. I intended to show how they achieved and sustained this form of talk locally and over time as the class progressed. In order to examine this form of talk, I adapted Boyd's (2011) and Boyd and Rubin's (2002) criteria for analysis: (1) elaboration of talk that extended a previous utterance in a way that extends and enhances meaning-making; (2) coherence that showed evidence of building upon the previous utterances; and (3) social engagement that showed evidence of reciprocal interaction and negotiation including uptake, authentic questions and high level evaluation (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). This focus was intended to reveal whether there were indeed changes or evidence of development in the language used, across a sequence of activities and tasks, thus examining to a form of what Halliday and Martin (1993) calls 'logogenesis' or growth in language and learning in the unfolding text of the ESL classroom.

Researcher's Positionality

Most, if not all, researchers are influenced, and in some cases, motivated by their past experiences. These previous experiences not only shape their beliefs, perceptions and attitudes toward their subject of study, but also influence the ways in which the meanings and interpretations they make of their observations are articulated (Erickson, 1984).

At the time of data collection, I was a middle-aged woman from South Korea who had been studying as a full-time doctoral student at the university. Before moving to the U.S. for study in the fall of 2006, I had taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for about fifteen years at the secondary levels in Seoul, South Korea. I was familiar with the issues and needs of language learning and teaching in the ESL as well as the EFL contexts. I was engaged in professional relationships with teachers and involved in the development of pedagogical materials for EFL learners. My class, like most EFL classrooms in my country, featured a traditional textbook-directed, teacher-controlled transmission mode of engagement with few opportunities for students to participate meaningfully in classroom interaction. Classroom reading activities involved teacher-driven discourses that honed skills in decoding texts, pronouncing words correctly and performing closed comprehension-based exercises. I was keenly aware that such a highly conventional nature of classroom practice constrains opportunities for the extended learner use of language offered by a more participatory orientation.

Thus, I acknowledge that my professional and academic experience as a classroom teacher and doctoral student informed the epistemological stance of this dissertation research, and influenced the meanings and interpretations that I drew from my observations. In the data analytic process, I remained aware that my own experience

and beliefs about language teaching and learning affected how I made sense of the ways in which learning had come about through particular classroom activities. More importantly, I was aware of the ways in which language and learning interact with the complexities of the classroom culture, particularly with respect to ESL student and teacher identities as well as their interaction with the societal norms at large. I admit that my position as a non-native speaker of English and an outsider of the teacher's and students' cultures necessarily entailed certain sensitivities and limitations in terms of my interpretations of the data.

Furthermore, I admit that my positioning as a researcher of a classroom-based approach affected the relationship that I developed with the participants and thus the data that I collected throughout the study. Since I believe that reciprocity is essential in conducting qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), I worked to position myself as an active member of the classroom community. I engaged in unstructured, informal conversations with the participants during the data collection period and even afterward. Ms. Brown and I discussed the students' engagement with the texts and other class members, as well as the curriculum and assessment decisions she made throughout the course. By conversing with the students, I sought to explore the meanings that they made of their practices and performances, as well as the attitudes they held about these practices and performances, both in and out of the classroom. Although there were issues nevertheless owing to my role in the classroom, I worked to undercover the sensitivities, biases and assumptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) that I brought to the research process and endeavored to be reflective of how these influenced the interpretations and explanations I made (Carbaugh, 2005; Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

Issues in Trustworthiness

Issues of trustworthiness are a central concern in qualitative research. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), “all research must respond to canons of quality — criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated” (p. 191). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the use of various techniques and methods to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative research. This study employed some of these techniques, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, reflexive journaling and member-checking.

Multiple sources of data and multiple methods of data collection for triangulation are commonly used in qualitative research to establish the soundness of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In a naturalistic inquiry such as this, research is an important instrument that shapes and constrains, filters and interprets, what is likely to be seen (Boyd & Rubin, 2002; Merriam, 1998). As described previously, to gain as complete as a picture of the classroom as possible and reconstruct what occurred, this study employed a variety of data sources and methods including audio and video recordings, the transcripts of these recordings, field notes, interviews with the teacher and students, teacher resources and student artifacts, and other documents used in class.

The data collection process for this study lasted nine weeks (one full summer course). I was present as an observer in the classroom, and I sustained engagements with the participants from the beginning to the end of the course. To minimize possible distortions of their learning that might result from my presence in the classroom, I worked to balance my research role as a passive participant observer and a moderate participant observer (Spradley, 1980) according to the situation at hand. I audiotaped the course in its entirety and further employed video recordings to supplement the data

obtained from the audio recordings. From the classroom observations, field notes were produced with personal, theoretical and methodological memos. I selected the data sources in which they were to be analyzed, established the framework for analysis and transcribed the classroom discourse.

To obtain participants' perspectives, I included interviews with both the teacher and students, the purposes of which were to increase the credibility of the data that I collected. Frequent member checks by these participants allowed me to confirm or disconfirm my initial analysis and interpretation. The iterative process of the data analysis allowed for the explicit and systematic acknowledgement of my observations and procedures. I kept a researcher journal and wrote analytic memos to document my emerging understandings of the data I collected and analyzed as well as to address the thoughts and questions that arose throughout the research process.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest, however, I do not contend that these practices alone render the findings of this study credible. Rather, I provided detailed descriptions of the methods of data collection and analysis employed in this study in the hope that readers would be able to draw their own conclusions about the findings and decide whether these are transferable to similar settings (Bogdan, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, I explicated in detail the theoretical and epistemological perspectives that guided this study and made clear my own positionality as a researcher so that the results would be more comprehensible to the readers.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study examined naturally occurring classroom data, which necessarily involves limitations to capturing all the complexities of the classroom. One limitation of this study involved a lack of certain visual data from the entire data collection period. During the second half of the data collection period, I utilized one camera due to the small classroom size. But I admit that it was insufficient to record relevant non-verbal aspects of information for all participants. As such, the descriptions and analysis of non-verbal information in the transcripts were limited.

A second limitation of this study resulted from my attempt to obtain rich descriptions of participants' engagement with the texts and their classmates. Although typical of sociocultural research (Foster & Ohta, 2005), the ways in which I made meaning of the collected data are limited by the particular perspectives of the small sample of participants I utilized in this dissertation study. Given that the discourse in the classroom interacts with the complexities of its own classroom culture, I resist assertions that similar results would have been produced from the same proficiency level of ESL students in different settings and other populations of students who have different linguistic, cultural and historical experiences. The results of this dissertation are only situated within the specific context in which the data were collected.

Furthermore, while the initial qualitative analysis accounted for all the data collected, the second phase of the discourse analysis attended to the fine-grained nature of selected excerpts. While the excerpts were considered as representative and illustrative, there were slight variations in each interaction that may have been lost in the move to focus on those selected excerpts for the fine-grained analysis.

Finally, although the sequences of the activity cycles that were identified were relatively recurring phenomena in all the classroom activities, this study cannot claim that the patterns of interaction and the accompanying discourse within that context are representative as a whole. Rather, I presented one kind of event, namely, discussions of literature, to highlight how this context could function as a springboard for elaborated, extended classroom talk in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the qualitative methodology utilized for examining young adult ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in discussions of literature in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom. The rationale for the researcher's decisions was presented followed by descriptions of the research site and the participants. Subsequently, the data collection and analysis procedures were described, along with a discussion of the framework for analysis. The researcher's positionality was included. Finally, issues of trustworthiness and the limitations of the study were discussed.

The following two chapters are devoted to the discussion of the research findings relevant to the guiding research questions. This dissertation study aimed to describe and interpret ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in a college-level intensive ESL course. As stated in previous chapters, two research questions formed the basis for my inquiry:

1. What are the ways that activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly in a high-intermediate level ESL reading and discussion classroom? What is the process of task completion in literature discussions?

2. What are the nature and characteristics of talk generated by ESL students in literature discussions? How do ESL students negotiate and construct meaning with the text?

CHAPTER IV:

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study is to describe and understand young adult ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in the high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom at a university-affiliated ELP program. In Chapters 4 and 5, I provide the findings from the analysis of the classroom discourse during the literature discussions. This analysis addresses two research questions, (1) "What are the ways that activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly in a high-intermediate level ESL reading and discussion classroom?" "What is the process of task completion in literature discussions?" and (2) "What are the characteristics of talk generated by ESL students in literature discussions?" "How do ESL students negotiate and construct meaning with the text?" The first research question is discussed in this chapter, and the second research question is addressed in Chapter 5.

The analysis for addressing the first research question focused on the ongoing sequences of teaching and learning activities involved in the literature discussions, which engendered the potential for generating elaborated, extended forms of talk in interaction through which joint construction of meaning was established. The major objective of the analysis was to describe and examine the ways in which the patterning of the participation and interactional structures changed from one lesson to the next in the class and from one class episode to another. This analysis was intended to reveal how aspects of several types of interactional patterns worked to construct different scripts of classroom discourse as the teacher and students negotiated their positions and relationships, thereby framing how they were expected to engage with the text and one another.

As stated in Chapter 3, the entire unit of work for the analysis involved four sessions of a pre-reading phase (30 to 75 minutes per session) and seven literature discussion sessions (70 to 80 minutes per session) that were carried out over the nine weeks of the course (see Table 2 for the course of the literature discussions).

In the following section, I first describe and interpret the ways in which Ms. Brown led the literature discussions with respect to the particular instructional approaches she employed, the pedagogical goals she identified for students engaging in these events and the procedures she chose for teaching and learning, all of which served to shape particular classroom structures that were progressively established. First, I begin by describing how Ms. Brown defined reading and discussion in her ESL classroom, which in turn informed the instructional approaches she selected for these processes. I then describe how she utilized a pre-reading phase to create a context that supported students' engagement in the activities.

Instructional Approaches

In designing and implementing literature discussions in her ESL classroom, Ms. Brown incorporated a sequence of several stages of teaching and learning activities, including a pre-reading phase to facilitate students' engagement with texts and other class members. To do this, Ms. Brown selected particular instructional approaches and identified pedagogical goals for the ESL students engaging in the literature discussions. In my post-lesson interviews with Ms. Brown, she explained what counted as reading in the ESL classroom, which provided the foundation for the ways in which she implemented ongoing sequences of activities and resources. The following is an excerpt from our dialogue:

Although they had a few, a little bit of the vocabulary of literary criticism, we were really doing something else, which was something I think that actually transfers to reading nonfiction. So, a lot of the skills they were looking at, inference, thinking about point of view, thinking about tone, that they were doing in the novel..... Those are things that will help them with reading nonfiction. So I think there was still a skill-base. Our textbook is a skill-based book. I think the way we were reading the novel was skill-based. (Ms. Brown, informal interview, June 22, 2010)

This quote indicates that all classroom activities in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom were basically oriented to be skills-based. As stated in Chapter 3, Ms. Brown utilized a range of classroom materials including textbooks, vocabulary, newspapers, short passages and others. With these materials, she designed activities such as timed readings and skill-based textbook discussions that focused on building and practicing diverse reading skills and strategies. Among the skills and strategies involved were making inferences, forming connections, identifying tone or points of view, isolating patterns of organization and performing critical reading. She thought that the skills gained from these activities would also transfer to reading literature.

Ms. Brown acknowledged that ESL students often lack the vocabulary knowledge necessary to understand texts. Accordingly, she implemented vocabulary learning as one of the classroom activities, and more often than not she worked to incorporate vocabulary learning into all classroom activities. At various moments during the classroom activities, she shared specific words that she felt were essential for understanding the texts.

From this perspective, Ms. Brown implemented literature discussions not only as a vehicle with which to practice the skills and strategies that could transfer to reading fiction or nonfiction but also as a source of reading enjoyment. For Ms. Brown, reading enjoyment was the overarching goal that her ESL students eventually needed to achieve, and the various analytic skills and strategies she employed were the tools that enabled her

students to achieve this goal. When asked about these skills and strategies, she stated the following:

Just to work on inference, or to think about “What would you do?” I was really happy when someone said, “Would you rather be a Zuni or a Navajo?” That means they’ve entered in. They know how they feel in relation to these two tribes, and they’re ready to talk about it. In other words, if you can ask questions about something, meaningful questions, you are aware that the author is creating meaning. There’s something there you’re trying to comprehend. So this is active reading. They start with a certain orientation to reading. So this is part of the reality of teaching this skill also. I can try to make it as appealing and show them the usefulness of this. And I think a lot of what I did was point them towards that goal. Reading is “Why should I care about this? Why does this matter?” The questions cover the possible ranges you talk about. They build ways of thinking when they read next novels. I’m interested in what their next novels are. (Ms. Brown, formal interview, August 3, 2010)

This quote can explain what counted as reading in Ms. Brown’s ESL classroom. It indicated that Ms. Brown positioned her students as learners and knowers as they read and talked about text. The students were encouraged to be actively involved in reading and relate them to their experiences and perspectives. This orientation of reading served as the foundation for literature discussions in Ms. Brown’s ESL classroom.

In summary, through both her interview statements and her teaching practices, Ms. Brown indicated that literature discussions involved more than closed comprehension processes; these discussions also involved the open-ended communicative processes through which meaning was to be collaboratively constructed with others (field notes on the ELP program curriculum for high-intermediate level reading classes, June 27, 2010; Ms. Brown, formal interview, August 3, 2010). In other words, classroom discussions functioned as social events in which students assumed the responsibility of making contributions and were encouraged to bring different cultural backgrounds and

personal responses to the class to generate, articulate and negotiate new meanings within their classroom community. Instead of looking for one correct interpretation of literary works, Ms. Brown held a stance of openness to the differing perspectives of the students and the ideas embedded in the texts. This orientation served as the foundation for literature discussions in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom.

Pre-Reading Phase

Literature discussions in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom were a literary event in which the teacher and students selected one particular novel to read, and explored meaning together over the seven weeks of literature discussion sessions. However, a literature discussion did not take place during the first week of the course. In the informal interview with Ms. Brown, she stated, "You have to show them how to do it first. And then they do it" (Ms. Brown, informal interview, June 22, 2010).

In line with this need for instruction and modeling, a range of teaching and learning activities were selected and sequenced by the teacher in order to facilitate students' engagement with the texts and others. For one such activity, Ms. Brown implemented four sessions of a pre-reading phase prior to the literature discussions in which she and her twelve students worked to establish ways of working for participation. In the following section, I describe the elements of one of Ms. Brown's pre-reading phases, including the ways in which she and the students chose a particular novel to read, developed expected ways of engaging with and responding to text, worked together to organize a range of discussion tasks and so forth.

CHOOSING THE NOVEL

In planning and enacting literature discussions, Ms. Brown initiated a pre-reading phase at the beginning of the course. This early activity was mainly designed to help students choose a novel to read and create tasks that they would be required to complete during literature discussions.

Student book selection was processed in a democratic manner to ensure some level of student interest. During week one of the course, Ms. Brown introduced a summary list of five novels from which students worked to select a novel to read over the course of the semester. When asked about the book selection, she stated the following:

The students had a hard time finding a novel. They will have, as Devi wrote, at the end say “Susan, I know I’m gonna spend so many hours reading this. Help me select one.” That is a legitimate question. So I helped them choose this novel. So I brought some candidates finally, and they voted on this novel. (Ms. Brown, informal interview, June 22, 2010)

She made the decision to begin the class in this manner in consideration of ESL students’ difficulty in choosing what to read and their limited time to complete the reading assignment during the short summer course (Ms. Brown, informal interview, June 22, 2010). Field notes indicate that the five novels introduced to the students were *Fahrenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury, 1953), *Dance Hall of the Dead* (Tony Hillerman, 1973), *I Heard the Own Call My Name* (Margaret Craven, 1967), *The Good Earth* (Pearl S. Buck, 1931), *The Outsiders* (S. E. Hinton, 1967), and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Mohsin Hamid, 2007). These novels are all narrative texts and display a range of difficulty in terms of culture and language for ESL students.

Next, Ms. Brown asked students to work in small groups and talk about which novels would be the most interesting for reading and discussion. A majority of the students found these novels to be challenging and culturally loaded (field notes, June 10, 2010). After the book discussion, the students dissolved the small groups to vote on a novel. The vote was conducted individually. The result was that of the 12 students, 6 voted for *Dance Hall of the Dead*. They all finally agreed to choose this novel over the others for two main reasons: first, it was relatively short in length in comparison with other novels; and second, its genre was a mystery, which was attractive to the students (ESL students, informal interview, June 10, 2010; field notes, June 10, 2010). *Dance Hall of the Dead* was new to all the students and to Ms. Brown. As a result, they decided together to read the same sections of text according to a reading schedule.

Dance Hall of the Dead is a detective story about a Navajo police lieutenant named Joe Leaphorn who investigates the murder of a young Zuni boy. The novel is divided into twenty chapters. In terms of the structure of this novel, the first chapter introduces the crime on which the book is based, and the remaining chapters present the events that unfold as a result of this crime. The story involves Lieutenant Leaphorn's quest to save a Navajo boy named George Bowlegs who is also in danger of being murdered. The investigation takes Leaphorn from the Navajo hogan of the missing boy to a nearby hippie commune, an archaeological dig site and finally a sacred lake that in the Zuni tradition is called the *Dance Hall of the Dead*. The author, Tony Hillerman, combines elements of several forms of detective fiction in the novel including ethnic fiction, detective fiction and the police procedural. The reader must not only follow the method utilized by the detective to track down the murderer of a Zuni boy but also comprehend the various cultural differences and conflicts that eventually affect the outcome of the book.

Because there was a large amount of highly culture-specific language and knowledge embedded in the novel, Ms. Brown introduced several supplemental texts intended to reduce the distance between students and the text and facilitate the accessibility of the text. For example, she brought a range of books, photographs, pictures and texts into the classroom to help build students' intertextual knowledge. Among these were *Black Rock: A Zuni Cultural Landscape and the Meaning of Place* (William A. Dodge, 2008); *Classic Hopi and Zuni Kachina Figures* (Andrea Portago, 2006); *The Kachina and the Cross: Indians and Spaniards in the Early Southwest* (Carroll L. Riley, 1999); *Kachina Tales from the Indian Pueblos* (G. M. Hodge, 1993); *Kachinas of the Zuni* (Barton Wright, 1986); *Indians of the Southwest: Traditions, History, Legends, and Life* (Lisa Sita, 2000); and *Indian dances of the Zuni Pueblo* (video-recording, produced by Millard Clark, 1996).

Ms. Brown introduced these supplemental materials to increase students' linguistic and cultural resources so that, through these resources, their understanding of the content of the text could also be fostered. She designed a schema-building exercise as an early activity performed jointly by the whole class in which knowledge of the author and various linguistic and cultural aspects pertinent to the novel were shared prior to embarking on the actual literature discussions. These supplementary resources including photos and pictures of Indian artifacts were utilized throughout the course of literature discussions to support students' gradual building of subject knowledge and language.

DESIGNING THE DISCUSSION TASKS

Following the selection of the novel, Ms. Brown organized the class into small groups within which students were asked to engage in the preliminary text analysis. The

text analysis included making a timeline of the story and eliciting and classifying different discussion questions from texts, all of which were activities that were closely related to Ms. Brown's overall organization of tasks as to expected ways of working with group members during literature discussions. Another goal for practicing the text analysis was to model conversations about texts to influence the ways in which students talked to one other during discussions of literature.

Ms. Brown first selected a newspaper article, "Hard work helped me appreciate the opportunities America offers" (*The Statesman*, June 6, 2010), as a focal text with which students were to speculate about the levels of engagements they would need to use with all assigned texts. Ms. Brown required students first to elicit discussion questions from the text and then to sort them out into five categories: fact questions, personal questions, impossible (to answer) questions, inference questions and prediction questions. This specific task took place during the first and second weeks and was intended to draw students' attention to the kinds of discussion questions that would serve to enhance or hinder a quality discussion. Excerpt 1 illustrates the task interaction, first facilitated through a timeline to be completed, for which the students had been assigned to work in small groups and examine question types.

Excerpt 1: *Pre-Reading* Phase Episode (1.2)

((From the group of Auken, she makes her way to the front of the class. She draws attention as she addresses the whole class. The whole class turns posture, facing the teacher.))

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 01 | T | OK. (2.0) Let's talk for a minute. I've got a question for |
| 02 | | you. <u>WHY</u> are we doing this? <u>WHY</u> does this matter? |
| 03 | Auken | To (.), uh, to know what kind of person we are discussing. |
| 04 | Steve | The thing, (.) we already know the textbook. |
| 05 | T | OK. It's to think about kinds of questions. Uh, what else? |
| 06 | | What's so good about doing this? |

07		(2.0)
08	Auken	In the future, we will define what kind of questions we are
09		asking.
10	T	Yeah, yeah, you are going to do this. Every time the book
11		club meets, you will <u>create</u> the questions. So I want you to
12		notice which questions are more fun to answer. YOU can
13		create the questions. And if the book club is interesting and
14		fun, it will be because the questions are interesting. That's
15		up to you. So you're going to create them. So why don't we
16		talk about this? Let's look at (.) which questions are more
17		interesting than others, because (.) they're not all equally
18		interesting. As you know, oh, let's see what we've got here.
19		Let's start with FACT questions. We've got some different
20		opinions. Some people, (.) let's take a look at thirteen.

Excerpt 1 occurred during week one. In this excerpt the students, who were working in groups, had been sorting the questions into five categories. In line 1, Ms. Brown interrupts the group work by asking, “Why are we doing this? Why does this matter?” with vocal emphasis. Ms. Brown’s “OK” in line 1 is a frame maker that signals a change in participation structure and initiates a new conversation with the entire class (Hellermann, 2008; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Her questions prompt responses from the students in lines 3 and 4, and she goes on to elicit students’ attention, in particular, to the kinds of questions that are more interesting with respect to conversation (lines 5 and 6). Auken, in line 8, responds by relating the current work to literature discussions, and Ms. Brown positively appraises and further elaborates her point by saying “because they are not all equally interesting.” Next, the class continued examining the questions one by one to assess which ones might be more interesting to answer. Through this joint activity, the students worked together to analyze all the questions they had elicited from the text and voted to sort them into the following five categories. In this way, Ms. Brown oriented the students to the talk exchanges so that the

entire class would think critically and talk jointly to establish the kinds of discussion questions and levels of engagement that could enable more effective and productive discussions.

Ms. Brown then moved to the task instructions such as the requirements and procedures of the literature discussions. The discussion tasks consisted of four steps that typically included (1) character analysis, (2) plot development, (3) favorite passages and (4) student-generated discussion questions. There were few exercises that involved explicit study of the grammar, vocabulary, idioms and so on. Excerpt 2 illustrates part of Ms. Brown's instructions for engaging in literature discussions.

Excerpt 2: *Pre-Reading Phase Episode (2.1)*

((Ms. Brown is standing in front of the class. She draws attention as she addresses the whole class. The whole class turns posture, facing the teacher.))

01	T	Now, let's go back to looking at what we are going to do in
02		the book club. So this is, just some background reading, so
03		you will know something about these Navajo and Zuni
04		people..... What happens when we get together? We are
05		going to set up three groups, three clubs, so you will talk to
06		the same people every time. In your club you'll go through.
07		The conversation has four steps. So those are called tasks or
08		jobs, if you look at it. Task one, task two, task three, task
09		four. The first is characters, the main people. So you've got to
10		keep track. You are going to keep a list of who the people are
11		in the story, the names and the description..... When you're
12		reading, is it something you like, something you enjoy? Mark
13		your favorite passage.

Excerpt 2 occurred during week two, and in this excerpt Ms. Brown had been working with her students to specify four major tasks that directed students on what to do during discussions of literature. Ms. Brown gave explicit instructions regarding the

course materials that she provided to each student. *Character analysis* involved talking about any new characters introduced in the chapters and their actions and decisions. *Plot summary* was a task in which students talked about what happened in the assigned text for that day and made a timeline of the story (i.e., what happened, who was involved, where it happened, when it happened) in a chronological sequence. This timeline provided students with the background information needed to understand the text. *Favorite passages* was a task in which students selected their favorite words or sentences in the chapters and shared them with their group members. *Student-generated discussion questions* were the ones that students needed to create for discussion. Ms. Brown stated that these questions were a vital part of the task requirements because she felt that they determined the students' levels of fun and engagement with the text and other class members.

Lastly, Ms. Brown set up a reading schedule with her students to keep everyone at the same place in the book. Ms. Brown explicated specific rules and procedures on what students were required to do for preparation. In order for literature discussions to function properly, students needed to: (1) read two or three designated chapters of the novel, or about 50 pages, per week independently at home; (2) prepare for discussion by posting three discussion questions on their online community, Nicenet; and (3) select their favorite passages in the text to share during the discussions. For each class meeting, Ms. Brown printed the student-generated questions from Nicenet and gave a copy to each student for discussion. The outline of the course of the literature discussions is provided in Table 2.

Table 4.1: Course of the Literature Discussions

Weeks	Descriptions	Work Time
Week One (Tuesday)	(A pre-reading phase) Choosing a novel to read in literature discussions	65 minutes
Week One (Thursday)	(A pre-reading phase) Preliminary text analysis Ways of responding to or engaging with texts and classifying discussion questions	75 minutes
Week Two (Tuesday)	(A pre-reading phase) Preliminary text analysis Setting up a reading schedule and assigning four discussion tasks	40 minutes
Week Two (Thursday)	(A pre-reading phase) Making discussion questions and practicing how to post the questions on Nicenet	30 minutes
Week Three	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> (Tony Hillerman). Chapters 1 and 2	80 minutes
Week Four	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> . Chapters 3, 4 and 5	75 minutes
Week Five	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> . Chapters 6, 7 and 8	70 minutes
Week Six	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> . Chapters 9, 10 and 11	75 minutes
Week Seven	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> . Chapters 12, 13 and 14	70 minutes
Week Eight	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> . Chapters 15, 16 and 17	78 minutes
Week Nine	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i> . Chapters 18, 19 and 20	77 minutes

Literature discussions lasted 70 to 80 minutes on average for a complete unit per session, which was twice as long as those of other reading and discussion classes in the same ELP program. As Table 2 above shows, Ms. Brown implemented a pre-reading phase to present a broad picture of what students were to do in literature discussions. She expected the practices employed during this initial stage to be utilized by students when they participated in future discussions of literature. The explicit instructions relayed by Ms. Brown indicated that in positioning herself as a “learning and discourse guide”

(Mercer, 2000), she effectively initiated activities and resources and provided necessary instructional scaffolds for students to engage constructively and critically with texts and others.

In the literature discussions, twelve students were organized into three groups of four, which remained the same throughout the semester. The groups were the Green Group (Aziz, Ahmad, Steve, Erzhan); the Blue Group (Nazer, Jorge, Duckjin, Davi); and the Purple Group (Auken, Mariam, Nia, Minji). The groups were divided into girls and boys, and there were two male groups and one female group. The students were grouped by different language backgrounds, which had the unintended result of separating them by gender.

In summary, the literature discussions in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom meant that all students read the same novel and met to discuss with the same members of the same groups on a weekly basis throughout the course.

SUMMARY

In this section I outlined what counts as reading in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom from the teacher's perspective. The analysis of the pre-reading phase showed that Ms. Brown initiated and sequenced a range of classroom activities and resources that were in close alignment with her instructional goals for productive literature discussions. First, a book selection was conducted in a democratic manner to ensure some level of student interest. Second, the teacher led the preliminary text analysis in which she worked to model and scaffold the ways of reading, asking, talking and thinking that were expected to be adopted by students when doing subsequent literature discussions. Third, the teacher worked together with the students to set up a reading schedule and establish

the discussion tasks so that they knew what was expected of them during and in preparation for the discussions. In this way, many of the rules and procedures for the discussion activity were established during this initial phase including engaging with the text and other group members, participating adequately and appropriately, responding to the text and assuming responsibilities within the group.

The Structure of the Literature Discussions

In this section, I employ micro-level analysis by examining moment-by-moment classroom interactions in an attempt to determine the ways in which literature discussions mediated young adult ESL students' participation and construction of knowledge. Informed by studies that developed observational schemes specifically for sequencing nature of classroom discourse (e.g., Bernstein, 1999; Christie, 2002; Gibbons, 2006; Lemke, 1990; van Lier, 1996; Wells, 1995), I document and examine the sequencing of teaching and learning activities that occurred at the level of episodes within the cycle of activity, which is defined as a sequence of one lesson in this study. As an attempt to answer the first research question, I argue that this activity cycle created distinct opportunities and contexts for ESL students to participate in and contribute to collaborative and collective manners of meaning making. The teaching and learning processes that I identified, which consist broadly of six stages within an overall lesson sequence, are shown in Figure 1.

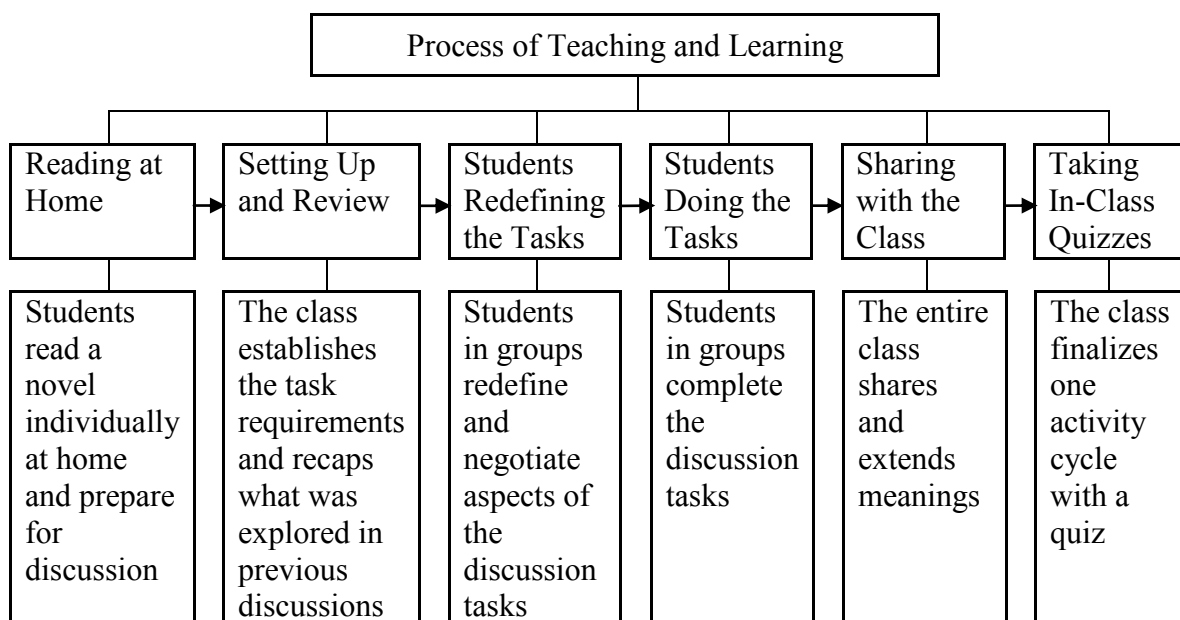


Figure 4.1: The Structure of the Literature Discussions.

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the construction of the lesson that shows the various stages of the ongoing classroom discourse and the ways in which these are related. Each of these six stages has its own pedagogic purpose with “a staged, goal-oriented social process” (Christie, 1995, 2002; Martin, 1984, 1997) that was discussed in detail earlier in this section. Observations and analysis showed that this set of sequenced stages of the activity cycle followed a predictable pattern that was repeated throughout the course of the literature discussions and also, to some extent, in the other activities in Ms. Brown’s reading classroom. A detailed analysis of the structure and elements of all the classroom activities and events was outside the scope of this study.

Work time taken for each stage varied depending on Ms. Brown’s pedagogical intention. For example, she utilized stages 2 (*setting up and review*) and 5 (*sharing with the class*) strategically as she attempted to engage students with the text and with other group members. Stage 3 (*students redefining the tasks*) occurred for a short period of

time, but it influenced the ways in which students talked about and approached the discussion tasks. Typically, most of the time was devoted to stage 4 (*students doing the tasks*), a stage in which Ms. Brown also participated in the student discussion. Table 3 illustrates how work time was allocated locally and changed over time.

Table 4.2: Time Allocation for Each Stage (in minutes)

Session \ Stage	Setting up and Review		Students Redefining the Tasks (mean time)	Students Doing the Tasks	Sharing with the Class	Taking In-Class Quizzes
Week Three	13	.	9	45	14	19
Week Four	8	.	4	54	11	18
Week Five	3	3	3	47	14	18
Week Six	4	7	4	48	13	17
Week Seven	3	4	5	47	11	19
Week Eight	3	13	3	47	12	18
Week Nine	2	12	3	49	11	19

On a micro level of moment-by-moment interactions, what was salient from the structural analysis of the literature discussions was that the sequenced stages identified in these discussions informed many of the patterns of discourse, along with the accompanying participant structures (e.g., teacher to whole class, student to student, individual) and interactional patterns that occurred (e.g., IRF sequence, teacher monologue, student-initiated participatory exchanges). The discussion participants' various positions (e.g., as contributors; evaluators, responders, facilitators, inquirers, etc.) were influenced by these dynamic factors.

The analysis of the ongoing sequencing of activities revealed several types of interactions, and these interactions represented the movement from least to most participatory in terms of the participant roles, i.e., from asymmetrical to symmetrical in terms of the participation rights. The interactional types in this classroom were marked by teacher monologue, teacher-student dialogic exchanges and student-student participatory exchanges (van Lier, 1996; Gibbons, 2006). For example, teacher monologue, which characterized stage 2 (*the teacher set up*), referred to those points in the discourse in which the teacher held the floor with only occasional interruptions by students. Teacher-to-student interactions, which characterized stages 2 (*the teacher's review*) and 5 (*sharing with the class*), referred to the discourse patterns that aligned with the Initiate-Response-Evaluate (IRE) (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979) sequence in which the teacher retained control of the discourse. But interaction boundaries were much more relaxed so that more dialogic forms of talk between the teacher and students could occur. On the other hand, student-to-student interactions characterized stages 3 (*students redefining the tasks*) and 4 (*students doing the tasks*) in which student-initiated participatory exchanges among students occurred.

The teacher's various positions affected the manner of engagements in these interactions. In other words, since reciprocal and dialogic forms of talk between the teacher and students decentered the teacher's position as the evaluator of student responses, the students were able to position themselves as the knowers (Berry, 1981; Johnston, 2004) in interpretations of the text. These patterns of interaction within and across episodes in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom indicated that they were recurring as the participants, both the teacher and students, constituted locally and over time.

In other words, the sequencing of activities meant that students were offered regular and extended opportunities for talk and interaction. Furthermore, in the

sequencing of the classroom activities, the degree to which the teacher retained primary control of the discourse was “not static but varied according to the pedagogical purpose” (Gibbons, 2006, p. 226) of particular tasks. The analysis showed that the sequenced stages in the literature discussions represented a relatively distinctive activity cycle in which the participants, both the teacher and students, cooperated in the pursuit of shared understandings and did not transmit single interpretations from the teacher to the students.

In the following section, I describe and examine each of the six stages that occurred in the literature discussions that had been played out. I present empirical examples that illustrate how locally organized and sequentially structured discourse activities are rooted in the participant’s participation structures. The schemes captured for analysis are presented in terms of three linked aspects of classroom interaction: (1) the stages identified in this study, (2) the patterns of participation and interaction associated with each stage, and (3) the positions adopted by the teacher and students. The excerpts selected contain representative, illustrative examples that characterized each stage.

STAGE 1: READING AT HOME

The first stage of the literature discussions involved independent reading at home prior to classroom discussion. This was the groundwork, or the personal preparation of the assigned text completed by the individual students before moving into sharing interpretations with the class, which was the focus of the lessons. In the literature discussions, Ms. Brown took up a response-based approach to literary analysis (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995) in which students were not restricted to one correct

interpretation of the text and were given freedom to take and hold the floor during participation.

Responses to the novel were two-fold. First, Ms. Brown wanted students to apply strategies that involved “what this novel is about” and “how the author describes characters” (Ms. Brown, classroom conversation, June 22, 2010). Second, Ms. Brown encouraged students to present responses that included making connections with their own personal experiences and other literary works. She asserted that “You want to discuss with exploration of the ideas in the text, and yet, I also want you to personally connect to the text” (Ms. Brown, formal interview, August 3, 2010). Consequently, what students wanted to talk about was not predetermined by the teacher but entirely decided by the students themselves. Once students had discussed accordingly, they were then able to assume the position of the primary knower in interpretations of the text.

From the response readings, students were asked to create two or three discussion questions about the novel and post them on their online community, Nicenet, in preparation for the class (see Appendix F for examples of the student-generated discussion questions). At the beginning of each meeting, Ms. Brown printed all the questions and gave a copy to each student. She also participated in this stage by posting her own questions, but she participated in a way that “I would try to, at the end, fill in with questions that they hadn’t asked about (Ms. Brown, informal interview, June 27, 2010). Her idea was that the questions covered a range of possible things that students could talk about in class.

The observations showed that although she found some grammatical errors in student-generated questions, she did not correct them. She believed that as long as the questions contained a message that students could understand, they were fine. The students further stated that although some of them were grammatically inappropriate,

unedited questions were more comprehensible to them (ESL students, informal interview, July 13, 2010).

Posting online was a planning time for classroom discussion. It gave students a chance to read and review in advance the ways in which the other class members responded to the text. The online posts, in turn, influenced the way students read and responded to the text. Ms. Brown thought that the student-generated questions were a vital part of literature discussions in that they were “an engine that makes the book club run” (Ms. Brown, classroom conversation, June 22, 2010) and helped to facilitate effective and productive conversations in the classroom.

The observations of participation behaviors showed that of the 12 students, 7 to 8 students regularly posted their discussion questions online, while 3 or 4 of the students rarely did so. The tendency not to post, however, was not always an indicator of student behavior with respect to the assigned homework reading. For example, although Steve frequently failed to post questions on Nicenet, I observed that he worked as an active contributor within his group by leading and facilitating discussions throughout the course of the literature discussions.

The analysis revealed that the number of questions posted over the seven weeks of literature discussions was 164 in total (see Appendix F for the student-generated discussion questions). Both the teacher and students created different kinds of questions. Fact questions (33% of responses) and inference questions (38%) were more common than personal questions (18%) and prediction questions (11%). The types of student-generated discussion questions are stated in Table 4.

Table 4.3: Types of Student-Generated Discussion Questions

Question Type	Fact	Inference	Personal	Prediction
100%	33%	38%	18%	11%

These results are in line with the classifications that this class had agreed on by voting during the pre-reading phase (see the pre-reading phase of Chapter 4 for the classifications of the kinds of discussion questions). In other words, these findings were influenced by Ms. Brown’s pedagogical objective of having students identify “which questions are more interesting to answer” (Ms. Brown, classroom conversation, June 10, 2010) during the discussions of literature. It appeared that students felt prediction questions involving what was going to happen next were either too challenging or less interesting to answer. The analysis showed that although a few questions were literal in scope, most of them centered on making the connections and inferences needed to process the text with higher-order thinking beyond literal recall.

STAGE 2: SETTING UP AND REVIEW

At the beginning of each lesson and at the start of the course, *setting up* and *review* typically occurred with Ms. Brown’s explicit instructions for carrying out new tasks and recapping what they had gained from previous discussions. Because of the highly culture-specific language and knowledge embedded in the text and the complexity of the discussion tasks, the *setting up* stage tended to necessitate Ms. Brown’s extended talk of task instructions. She started off with procedural segments in which she set up the tasks, along with introducing relevant resources.

Mostly Ms. Brown acted as a ‘facilitator’, providing information whenever necessary or making sure that students were on task. For example, since 70 to 80 minutes of literature discussions required students to assume a great deal of responsibility, the teacher’s *setting up* stage was introduced at the beginning of the course and repeated at the initiation stage of every lesson. Although much of the routines, rules and procedures for activity were shaped during the pre-reading phases, the major work at this stage was that of reinforcing the processes by which these were to be carried out, i.e., the ways of responding to the text and the expectations with regard to participation behaviors, all of which made it possible to establish a kind of dialogic and participatory classroom talk in Ms. Brown’s ESL classroom. These procedural explanations of the tasks and activities through explicit instruction provided a scaffold for the students to position themselves as legitimate members of classroom participation. Excerpt 3 exemplifies this type of scaffolding.

Excerpt 3: *Setting up* Stage Episode (3.1)

((Ms. Brown is standing in front of the class. She draws attention as she addresses the whole class. The whole class turns posture, facing the teacher.))

01	T	Finally, (.) we have come to the book club. <u>So</u> , the first time
02		you do something, (.) you are figuring out the rhythm, how it
03		works. I asked you all to post your questions and this is so:: <u>fun</u> .
04		They are EXcellent questions. I loved it. I read them and I
05		smiled. I thought, woah, you have created wonderful things to
06		talk about. This is part of the assignment. You will be graded
07		not (.) on your questions but are the questions there, because
08		this is what, this is the engine that makes the book club run. The
09		questions are what we will talk about for an hour..... It’s
10		feedback for me. It’s feedback for each other. That way you can
11		go on Nicenet. You can see other people’s questions. You can
12		think about them. I asked you to post them before lunch time.

Excerpt 3 occurred during week three. In this excerpt, Ms. Brown was giving instructions with respect to the procedures of each of the four tasks and explaining what students were expected to do with group members while referring to the list of the discussion questions that she had given to each student. Ms. Brown's first utterance "Now" in line 1 is a frame marker that signals a transition to another transaction (Hellermann, 2008; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) within the lesson. In the excerpt, Ms. Brown comments positively on the discussion questions that students generated and elaborates further on her talk to elicit students' attention once again to the manner in which each member of the groups should work together during the activity.

The *setting up* stage typically created a teacher-led, whole-class participation structure. Ms. Brown was spatially positioned in front of the class, and the students oriented their posture to the front of the class where she was positioned. For the most part, Ms. Brown did the majority of the talking with only occasional interruptions by students. Once the rules and procedures for activity were established and the students "operated with competence and independence" (Christie, 1995, p. 230), this stage was combined with the *review* stage in which Ms. Brown spent more time modeling and scaffolding ways of reading, talking and thinking needed for student engagement.

On the other hand, the *review* stage offered an opportunity for the whole class to review what was explored in previous discussions, which was then taken as a shared starting point for the current class discussion. Since this ESL class read and discussed one novel over the seven-week semester, the previous literature discussion was meaningfully connected to the next. Ms. Brown often began with a brief summary of the previous day's section of text and asked students to reflect on what had been learned. The conversation was intended to connect what was newly introduced in that day's section of text. During

this stage, she also had the class share key words or concepts that she considered significant in understanding the text.

The typical practices during this *review* stage were marked by a review of the plot summaries, a review of the characters and character analysis, and a definition of key vocabulary and concepts that students encountered in the text (e.g., “jurisdiction”, “personify”, “sacrilege”, “salting the site”, Navajo and Zuni words such as “kachina”, “Shalako”, “the Little Fire God”, etc.). In most cases, the teacher initiated this review. Excerpt 4 illustrates the *review* function of the teacher-fronted character analysis discussions.

Excerpt 4 occurred during week seven in which Ms. Brown is recapping what was learned about Chester Reynolds during the previous discussion. In the novel *Dance Hall of the Dead*, the story of the Folsom man is not only central to the plot, but it also symbolizes one of the author’s recurrent themes. Dr. Reynolds is described as a well-known anthropologist. With an evil purpose, he manufactures fake evidence and plants it in a dig site as a shortcut to prove his Folsom man theory. When Detective Leaphorn says he heard the boys George and Ernesto had stolen something from Reynolds’ truck, Reynolds and his protégé, Isaacs, deny that anything was stolen. In chapters of 12, 13 and 14, Reynolds is reintroduced and his motivation for killing is revealed to the reader.

Excerpt 4: Review Stage Episode (7.1)

((Ms. Brown is standing in the front of the class. She draws attention as she addresses the whole class. The whole class turns posture, facing the teacher.))

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 01 | T | And then, (1.0) one of the questions about Chester Reynolds, |
| 02 | | cause he’s kind of interesting fellow up here. Why was |
| 03 | | Leaphorn interested in him? There are lots of reasons. That’s a |
| 04 | | question with many aspects. |
| 04 | Ahmad | He studied at a university. |

05 T Okay. That's one reason: he was the author of the textbook.
06 What's another reason?
07 Aziz He has knowledge about the Navajo history.
08 T Okay. Now (.) what do we know about Reynolds? Are you
09 interested in him? (1.0) What do you remember about him?
10 SS *((Several students simultaneously respond to the teacher))*
11 Uptight? A fetish? The site?
12 T Yeah, you remember? He's the one who stormed into the site,
13 creating all this dust. (1.0) Do you remember in Chapter Seven?
14 There's a time when Leaphorn stops and he thinks about all the
15 pieces of the puzzle that don't (.) make (.) sense. (2.0) Not
16 everybody can be telling the truth in this book, right? What do
17 we know? What does Leaphorn know?
18 Aziz Is something missing?
19 T OK, who says there's something missing?
20 Aziz [Suzanne?]=
21 Nazer =[Suzanne said that] Ernesto stole some artifacts. And that's
22 why these artifacts were in Chester Reynolds' uh (1.0)=
23 T =Yeah, who says nothing is missing?
24 Ahmad The boss?
25 T Yeah, Reynolds. Are both telling the truth?
26 SS *((Several students simultaneously respond to the teacher))* No.
27 No.
28 T Who's lying? (1.0) OK. We don't know. That's where we were
29 until we got to today, right? We don't know, but now with
30 today's chapters we've got added motivation. What came in the
31 today's chapters? (1.0) What, what came? Someone new has
32 entered the picture. Motivation.
33 Aziz Is it about Suzanne?
34 T No. Suzanne's been there. What does Baker represent?
35 SS *((Several students simultaneously respond to the teacher))*
36 Drugs. Drugs.
37 T Drugs. All of the sudden now, we've got something new to
38 think about. So you all created once again. You are the stars of
39 asking great questions. I got three pages. Good jobs here. So,
40 let's go to the Green Group, the Blue Group, and the Purple
41 Group. Let's talk about it.

In Excerpt 4, Ms. Brown initiated a conversation by asking the class details about the character of Chester Reynolds, who was reintroduced in that day's section of text.

Ms. Brown's questions "What do we know about Reynolds?" "Who says something is missing?" and "What's another reason?" required students to respond in a more collective manner. By giving responses such as "He studied at a university" (line 4), "He has knowledge about the Navajo history" (line 7), "Uptight? A fetish? The site?" (line 11), "Is something missing?" (line 18), and "Ernesto stole some artifacts" (line 21), the class worked together to share current understandings of Chester Reynolds, and this served as a basis for inferring an emerging understanding of the character's actions. Ms. Brown's question "Who's lying?" and her immediate acknowledgement "We don't know" in line 28 marked a shared point of what students had learned thus far. From this shared point of reference, the students began to talk about whether Cecil or Reynolds was lying, and why they would lie and say that the boys stole artifacts if they had not. The repeated use of the plural subject pronoun *we* as in "What do we know?" or "We don't know" referred inclusively to Ms. Brown's stance to the interpretive classroom community of readers. In lines 34 through 36, a new character is introduced, but Ms. Brown did not expand on this character because this was to be the topic of exploration during the *students doing the tasks* stage. The talk exchanges between the teacher and students end in lines 39 through 41 when Ms. Brown asks students to transition the participation structures from a teacher-cohort focus into a student-student focus and start the literature discussion within their small groups.

During the teacher-fronted *review* stage, Ms. Brown was spatially positioned in front of the class to lead discussions of what happened in the story. The *review* stage created teacher-controlled, whole-class interactions. Importantly, the goal of this stage was to achieve a mutual understanding of the topic at hand that had been constructed and was now shared. From this shared point of reference, the current day's discussion began.

Excerpt 4 indicates that Ms. Brown's questioning took the form of the less restricted Initiate – Response – Evaluate (IRE) (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979) sequence. As students responded, she suspended immediate evaluations of whether they were correct, choosing instead to build on their comments as opportunities to collect understanding. Her frequent use of discourse markers such as “OK” or “Yeah” was intended to confirm student contributions and ask for further information. The effect was to underscore any responses from students as valuable to collective understanding.

Her use of the first person plural *we* embraced the entire class as an “interpretive community,” suggesting that she and the class were working together. The analysis indicates that this minor positional change from the teacher effectively accommodated student authorship (Goffman, 1981) of the discourse. Excerpt 5 illustrates how Ms. Brown asks questions to position herself as a seeker of knowledge rather than the primary knower.

Excerpt 5 took place during week four in which the class had been reviewing the first few chapters of the novel. The author, Tony Hillerman, develops his main characters, Cecil, George and Cata in these chapters. Their relationships reflect tensions between their cultures. Cecil is described as a young Navajo boy who resents his brother George's attempts to integrate with the Zuni society, which has treated them both badly. Cecil is therefore skeptical about the friendship between George and Ernesto, who is a Zuni. Cecil is astute enough to realize that Ernesto looks down on George because he is a Navajo.

Excerpt 5: Review Stage Episode (4.1)

((Ms. Brown is standing in the front of the class. She draws attention as she addresses the whole class. The whole class turns posture, facing the teacher.))

- 01 T Now, What is Cecil? Do you remember (.) how old Cecil is?
02 Davi He's eleven.
03 T Eleven and he's in fourth grade, I think. And what was his
04 opinion (.) about their relationship, his older brother's
05 friendship? What did he think about that friendship?
06 Ahmad They know each other but they're not really friends.
07 T He was skeptical. (1.0) I don't know, either, is this realistic? Is
08 a ten-year-old or an eleven-year-old boy capable of being
09 skeptical about his older brother?
10 Auken Maybe.
11 T When you were eleven, would, (.) could you think that way? I
12 don't know that I could=
13 Auken =But it's possible.
14 T OK. So he's skeptical. But maybe, (1.0) but we are getting
15 different opinions about what kind of guy George is and what
16 kind of guy Ernesto is. So what is Cecil? If he's skeptical, what
17 is he accusing Ernesto of doing?
18 (2.0)
19 Davi Maybe he coerces, uh, coerces his brother to do something
20 wrong.
21 T Yeah, he is just using his brother, not really a friend.
22 Aziz Exploit?
23 T Exploiting.
24 SS *((All the students laugh))* hah hah hah

In Excerpt 5, Ms. Brown marks the opening of a new conversation with a frame marker “Now” (line 1) and prompts students to engage in character analysis of Cecil. Ms. Brown’s questions (lines 7 through 9) concern how an eleven-year-old boy, at most, can be skeptical about the friendship between his brother and Ernesto. Ms. Brown extends her views about Cecil with the use of the deictic *you* to elicit personal connections between this character and the students: “When you were eleven, would you, could you think that way?” The students’ responses of “Maybe” (line 10) and “But it is possible” (line 13), indicate that they do not agree with the teacher’s ideas. She acknowledges student

contributions by responding “maybe, but we are getting different opinions about what kind of guy George is” (lines 14 through 15).

As seen in Excerpt 5, the data showed that there were a number of instances in which students openly disagreed with the opinions and ideas put forth by the teacher. Ms. Brown’s position of “I don’t know” or “maybe, but we are getting different opinions” implied that she was willing to acknowledge the shared authority (Oyler, 1996) of each individual’s contributions. Ms. Brown’s stance of “I don’t know” effectively accommodated multiple perspectives and, by extension, the ongoing development of student understandings of the text. The analysis showed that Ms. Brown continued to assume the position of “I don’t know” or “maybe” throughout the course of the literature discussions.

In summary, the primary goals of the *setting up* and *review* stage were to share Ms. Brown’s explicit instructions for carrying out new tasks and recap what the class had gained from previous discussions. While the teacher’s talk was monologic with occasional interruptions by students during the *setting up* stage, the discourse patterns between the teacher and students in Excerpts 4 and 5 of the *review* stage implicitly embodied a view of knowledge as co-constructed and negotiable rather than discrete and given. In the knowledge construction process, Ms. Brown shared the position as a seeker of knowledge with the students. As a result, the discourse became interpersonally more symmetrical in terms of who was positioned as the expert in interpretations of text despite the IRE structure of exchanges between the teacher and students. This type of discourse pattern occurred similarly during the *sharing with the class* stage.

STAGE 3: STUDENTS REDEFINING THE TASKS

Following the *setting up* and *review* stage, the students moved into small groups to explore and share their interpretations of the text by working with the discussion question list (see Appendix F). Literature discussions in this ESL classroom were carried out in three groups of four students: the Green Group (Aziz, Ahmad, Steve, Erzhan), the Blue Group (Nazer, Jorge, Duckjin, Davi) and the Purple Group (Auken, Mariam, Nia, Minji). Each group moved their chairs in the form of a circle to discuss.

As the group discussion began, each group of students entered into negotiation moves in which they clarified and redefined the teacher's task instructions before the actual start of the literature discussions. Since Ms. Brown did not assign roles for students to perform in the literature discussions, students in each group explored particular aspects of discussion tasks: for example, who leads a discussion, who summarizes the story, who talks about new characters, how they approach the list of discussion questions, etc. At the beginning of each meeting, this sequence of negotiation was a relatively recurring action for the framing of the upcoming discussion tasks. As the class progressed and the procedural matters were gradually resolved within the groups, the students spent more time clarifying semantic meaning or linguistic forms in the discussion questions. This work of clarification often involved various unfamiliar lexical matters, particularly those that related to the culture-specific features of the text. Furthermore, teasing or laughing at one other's questions reflected the students' level of fun and engagement in the activities.

With respect to the teacher, Ms. Brown quickly changed her position from that of an authoritative figure to that of a moderator or oftentimes a co-participant in the interaction by spatially moving to the side of the groups. At the same time, this organizational change by the teacher allowed students to enter the discourse as the experts with their own interpretations and analyses of the text. For the most part, she

circulated from group to group and monitored the group progress of talk and checked on whether they were ‘on task’. The layout of the classroom and the positions of the teacher as she moved around the classroom during the stages 3 (*students redefining the tasks*) and 4 (*students doing the tasks*) of student-to-student talk exchanges are shown in Figure 2.

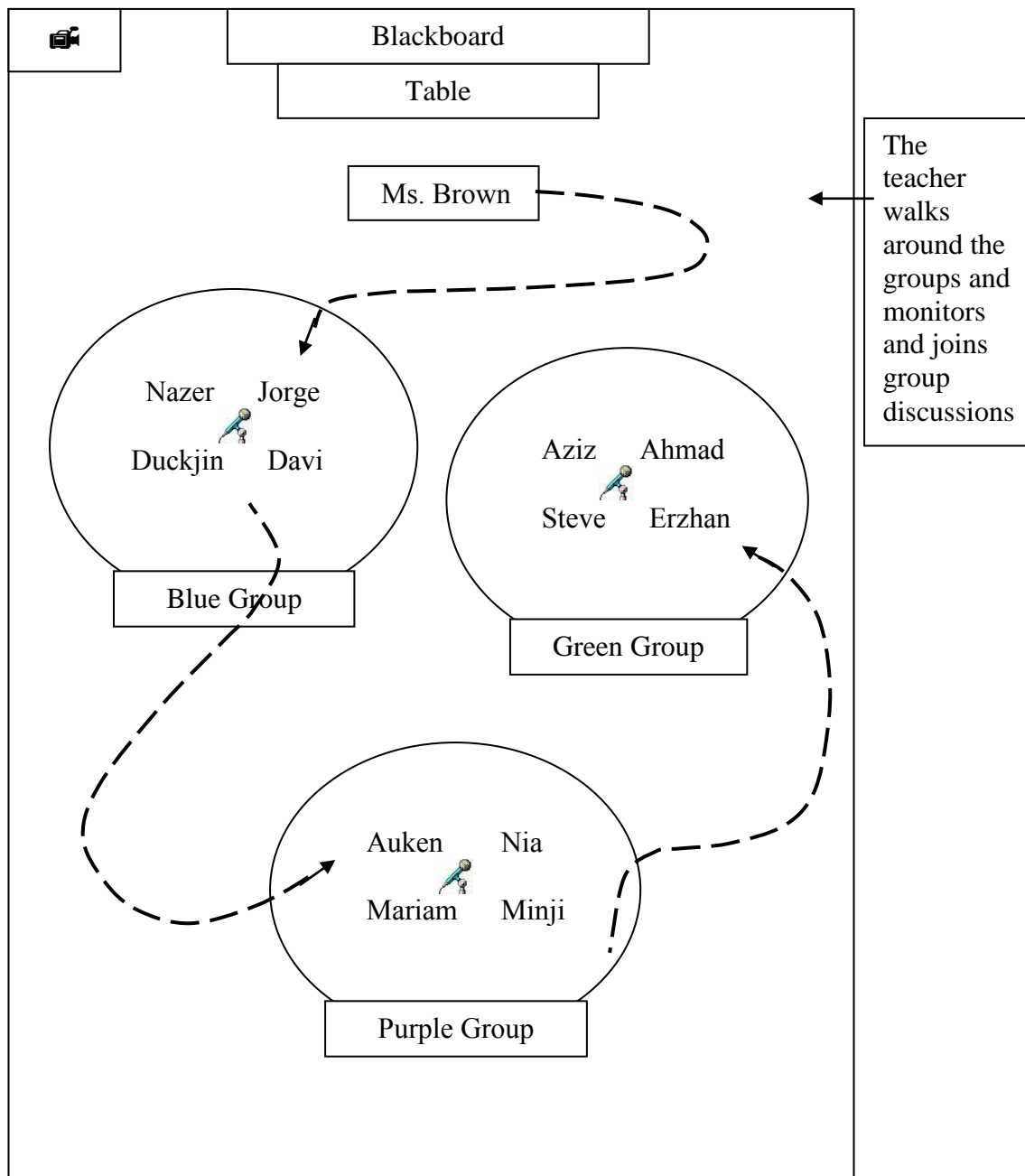


Figure 4.2: Classroom Layout

Excerpt 6 shows one such example of negotiation of participation that occurred during week three when students held their first literature discussion.

Excerpt 6: *Students Redefining the Tasks* Stage Episode (3.1)

((Ms. Brown is standing in the front of the class. The students are still facing the teacher as she addresses the whole class.))

01 T So let's take it one step at a time. The first is to get in
02 groups..... So, (1.0) everybody, stand up. Energize your brain.
03 Move your chair and your desk, and turn your desk, so you can
04 face each other for conversation..... All right. Take a quick
05 look at the paper I've just handed you. There you will see the
06 questions all (.) together. Remember, the first thing you do is
07 just get the big picture. Talk about the characters (.), the
08 timeline (.), and if you want to talk about your favorite part
09 now, or at the end you can talk about your favorite part. Then,
10 you are in charge of leading conversation for your questions.
11 So, each of you make sure (.) you get an answer for your
12 question and then choose as many of the other questions as you
13 want to talk about, the ones that interest you. We've got an
14 HOur.

15 *((Students move their chairs and align their posture toward*
16 *group members for discussion. Students are looking down at*
17 *their handouts))*

18 (13.0)

19 Davi *((After a long period of silence, Davi watches his group*
20 *members as he starts to speak))* Okay. (1.0) How would you
21 like to do this? I don't have which question is, this is too much
22 to go between the questions.

23 Jorge Let's just talk about our questions first. Like (.) some (.)=

24 Davi =Yeah, one of our questions. I think it's the only way one for
25 one, for each, each student.

26 Jorge Okay. Each student talk about their questions.

27 (2.0)

28 Davi I don't know. (1.0) I think we can (.) get one for each student.

29 Jorge And answer it?

30 Davi Yeah, the number one. I don't know. I didn't see but other
31 things.

32 T *((monitors this group and joins the conversation))* Well, first
33 make sure you know the characters. Who are the people in the

34 story so far? How many people have we got?
35 Nazer George, Cata, and the detective, [and in this book, and]=
36 SS *((Davi and Nazer both simultaneously respond))* [The Zuni law,
37 the sheriff, Zuni police]
38 T Who is Shorty? Ernesto? Isn't that his name?
39 Davi Who is Ernesto? I forgot.
40 T The Fire God.
41 Davi Okay. Uh, George's dad, Shorty.
42 T *((helps them with the approach))* And just briefly in each
43 chapter you were doing a timeline. What has happened?
44 (2.0)
45 Davi Okay, it begins with the Fire God. What's the name of the day?
46 The celebration? Shalamobia, °No.°
47 SS *((Erzhan and Jorge both simultaneously respond))* Shalako.
48 Shalako.
49 Davi Who here shows in this book?
50 Erzhan I don't know.
51 (2.0)
52 Davi Okay. Where are we in the timeline? Where are we in the
53 timeline? The Little Fire God, hahaha, has finished and in the
54 Chapter Two=
55 Nazer =Chapter Two starts from, his name is=
56 SS *((Jorge and Davi both simultaneously respond))* Leaphorn,
57 Leaphorn
58 Nazer =Yeah, Leaphorn. (2.0) Are we discussing the problems or all
59 other attitudes of our, uh=
60 Erzhan =We can start with, uh, (1.0) the disappearance. Leaphorn got
61 the task to find those boys, so that the Chapter Two starts with,
62 with the news that they've disappeared.
63 Davi Yeah, yeah. [And then haha]=
64 Nazer =[Before, before] he came, the sheriff is discussing with
65 other people what happened. He is searching for facts. (1.0)
66 Then, they are gathering together. [°That's all.°]
67 Jorge [°That's all.°]
68 Davi [OK. We can try the questions.]
69 (1.0) One by one.
70 Jorge *((reads the first discussion question from the handout))* Why
71 exactly Ernesto Cata has been selected by the Zuni tribe to play
72 the role of the Little Fire God during the upcoming festival of
73 Shalako?

In Excerpt 6, the Blue Group (Nazer, Davi, Erzhan, and Jorge) is about to start a literature discussion. Immediately after the teacher's brief instructions to the class for the tasks (lines 1 through 14), the students in this group turn to face one other and enter into the negotiation of participation. After a pause, Davi (line 19) marks the shift to a student-student participation structure with a frame marker "OK" and opens an interaction with an assertion about the list of discussion questions. Davi's question "How would you like to do this?" concerns the manner in which they should work together to complete the discussion tasks. Jorge responds hesitantly to him with suggestions (lines 23 through 26). Davi elaborates Jorge's suggestions (lines 24 through 25) and then seeks mutual agreement in terms of how to approach the discussion tasks: "I think we can get one for each student" (line 28).

As the Blue Group focuses only on the list that is presented to them, Ms. Brown steps in to provide a reminder of the procedures with respect to the tasks to help reinforce the task requirements (lines 32 through 34). With the help of the teacher, this group then moves to a discussion of the new characters introduced in the assigned section of text (lines 35 through 41) and the timeline of the story (lines 45 through 66). Excerpt 6 occurred at the beginning of the course, and, as it indicates, students' understandings of the text were not well developed. Thus, as evidenced by "Shalako, Shalako" or "Leaphorn, Leaphorn", the content of the talk was not extended between turns. Nazer (line 58) attempts to negotiate the procedural matters by asking "Are we discussing the problems or all other attitudes of our, uh?" But Erzhan, in line 60, jumps into the middle of the turn to add what happened in Chapter Two to the timeline, and Nazer (line 64) makes a collaborative completion (Lerner, 1991) of the task. In this way, all members of the Blue Group work together to get the big picture of what happened in the story. Finally, students begin the literature discussion using the discussion questions (line 70).

The observation showed that the *students redefining the tasks* stage created a context for an important aspect of participation and talk in the classroom. The negotiation of the task interactions among students was important for contextualizing the tasks at hand and seemed to help pave the way for fuller participation and engagement in the subsequent discussion tasks.

Excerpt 6 suggests that the requirements of the discussion tasks as defined by the actions of the teacher were revisited by group members and achieved in a collaborative manner. The incidences of overlapping talk and latching between utterances indicate that the students were engaged in enhanced participation. Latching in the student-to-student exchanges involved in two or more students creating a hybrid utterance in a flow of the co-construction of meaning. The students often interrupted between utterances and finished one another's sentence at various points during discussions, as evidenced in lines 60 through 62.

The following four examples, which occurred during the *redefining the tasks* stage at different points in the lessons, show negotiation moves similar to those illustrated in Excerpt 6 in Ms. Brown's ESL classroom:

- (1) We, we have to, we have to, uh, answer this question? this question?... I think we don't need to do that. (Green Group, week three)
- (2) I have a grammar question. Is this a right expression?... I thought Chapter Six is the most interesting. Chapter Six is about, uh, just... (Blue Group, week five)
- (3) OK. Let's get started with this question first. This time, who's gonna be the leader? ...Rotate. Take turns... I suggest designation. heh, heh. (Green Group, week four)

- (4) This time we just skip the questions that we, we think aren't interesting... I chose this one. I chose this one because I like these quotations. This is good.
(Blue Group, week seven)

As the class progressed, this negotiation of task interactions by group members was greatly reduced (see Table 3). However, it appeared that the initial negotiation work must have been well facilitated in this situation, as it entailed different ways of participation that characterized each group of students in the classroom. The observation showed that although Ms. Brown repeatedly reminded the students of the task requirements they needed to follow, the initial negotiation moves in each group were carried out in a slightly different way.

For example, while the Green Group (Aziz, Ahmad, Steve, Erzhan) and Blue Group (Nazer, Jorge, Duckjin, Davi) were actively engaged in this *students redefining the tasks* stage, this type of talk and interaction was noticeably absent in the Purple Group (Auken, Mariam, Nia, Minji). The observation showed that after an initial period of silence during which they looked through a list of the discussion questions individually, the Purple Group began the discussions by working with the list of questions. Throughout the course of the literature discussions, there was little talk involving new characters, favorite passages or the timeline that Ms. Brown had hoped for. There was even less talk about the ways in which they worked through the discussion tasks.

The sustained observations of this Purple Group indicate that these students might not have had difficulties in understanding the task requirements because they showed a significant level of contributions to the discussions when they were engaged in the whole-class interactions. As Gibbons (2006) explains, the perceptions of the students do not always concur with the pedagogical intentions of the teacher. This was observable that, at the beginning of the class and in the early stages of the lessons when new tasks

were implemented, Ms. Brown visited each group in turn and repeated brief explanations of what they should do in small groups.

In summary, the negotiation of the task interactions during the *redefining the tasks* stage appeared as part of a shared “repertoire” (Freebody & Luke, 2003; Rogoff, 2003) of ways of engaging in activities that were both learned from participating in classroom cultural practices and constructed by group members. Hellermann (2008) found a similar phenomenon in terms of negotiation moves in his research on second language classrooms. He noted that the initial negotiation moves allowed group members to ensure “mutual engagement, shared understanding among participants, and, to shift from interpersonal to content-focused interaction” (Kasper, 1979, cited in Hellermann, 2008, p. 44). Similarly, the observation showed that since Ms. Brown did not assign roles for students to perform, each group regularly experienced the *students redefining the tasks* stage. Whether they just teased and laughed at each other’s questions or remained silent to read the questions, the students effectively achieved mutual engagement in activities through all the verbal and nonverbal interactions of negotiation (e.g., words, gestures, gaze, laugh, posture) as well as other semiotic resources such as handouts before moving to the next stage.

STAGE 4: STUDENTS DOING THE TASKS

At this stage, each group of students was engaged in doing literature discussions. First, they talked briefly about new characters, a timeline, and favorite passages in order to get the big picture of “what this novel is about” (Ms. Brown, classroom conversation, June 22, 2010), and then moved on to complete the list of the current discussion questions (see Appendix F for examples of student-generated discussion questions). The

observation showed that since students were required to complete the four discussion tasks at hand, the distinction between the *students redefining the tasks* stage and the *students doing the tasks* stage was often blurred, and the negotiation moves that occurred between each task facilitated their focus on the tasks. The *students doing the tasks* stage lasted 45 to 55 minutes on average and was allotted the most work time within the activity cycle to generate an extended period of time for student-led discussions.

The student-student exchange in this stage created a safer space than in any of the other stages because students felt more comfortable inviting their peers to interact and offer opinions in response to the text. The students' discourse tended to take the form of a "collective inquiry" (Lindfors, 1999; Martínez-Roldán, 2005) as they attempted to elicit the help of others in going beyond their own present understanding. The observation showed that they were willing to acknowledge uncertainty, offer partial understandings and collectively construct their resulting meaning-making through talk. Consequently, the *students doing the tasks* stage provided opportunities for students to produce more elaborated and extended talk and built upon their own previous utterances as well as those of other members. For the most part, student-led discussions were focused on the depiction of events and characters in the text and the students' reactions to them. These discussions were not restricted to "correct" or single interpretations of text. Excerpt 7 provides an example of student-to-student interactions.

Excerpt 7 occurred during week seven, and in this excerpt the Blue Group (Nazer, Davi and Jorge) had been discussing chapters 12 to 14. In these chapters, the spiritual theme is developed as the knowledgeable Father Ingles shares the Zuni traditions with Leaphorn. Up to this point, the reader has been given little direct knowledge about key aspects of the plot including what motivated George to find a kachina and what Ernesto was afraid of. Through the voice of Father Ingles, the author finally reveals detailed

information such as George's possible location, the meaning underlying the Shalako festival and the Zuni beliefs about afterlife. As the story unfolds, the reader learns that fact becomes mixed with legend, which affects the outcome of the book.

Excerpt 7: *Students Doing the Tasks Stage Episode (7.1)*

((Blue Group is sitting in a circle, facing each other. There is a short period of silence as the students are looking at their handouts.))

- 01 Davi Let's move. Okay. Let's start with Nia's questions.
 02 Nazer *((reads out a discussion question from the handout))* What is
 03 the role of the Father Ingles in this story? He was a father in the
 04 church.
 05 Davi I think he has a big hole, hahaha.
 06 SS *((Nazer and Jorge both simultaneously respond))* Big hole?
 07 Davi Hahaha, big role, important, important. Okay. I think his role is
 08 to tell, to help find, understand the enigmas between the, the
 09 name is in Zuni=
 10 Nazer =Yeah, Ernesto, Ernesto, came, came to mischarge for Ingles
 11 and told him about absolution, not absolution. He [told about]=
 12 Davi =[It's a kind of absolution.]
 13 Nazer =Do you remember they stole some stuff, uh, from the digging
 14 place? When they stole, he came to, uh, Father Ingles and asked
 15 for sins. He said please forgive my sins or something else. He
 16 knows what, uh, he did, he stole.
 17 Davi I think (.) he could be a kind of key, uh, to solve the words that
 18 their friend came to understand. Like the, the, (.) the dance hall
 19 of the dead, what is that? Kachina. Always those words.
 20 Nazer He plays a very important role in the story. Without him it's
 21 impossible for Leaphorn to find (.) George.
 22 Nazer Okay. *((reads a discussion question to his group))* Why wasn't
 23 Father Ingles asked about the vanish of George before this
 24 chapter? Do you think that Leaphorn did it on purpose? Or you
 25 think that he missed this link of a whole chain?
 26 (2.0)
 27 Jorge Before this chapter?
 28 Davi Why [didn't he ask before?]=
 29 Jorge *((still looks down at his handout and reading himself again))*
 30 =["Why wasn't Father Ingles asked about the vanish of George
 31 before this chapter?"]

32 Nazer He didn't ask for some purpose or he forgot. Because before
 33 this chapter, he said that Bowlegs, uh, George Bowlegs was a
 34 lost person who didn't, uh, who wasn't asked about this vanish.
 35 He didn't mention the, Father Ingles.
 36 Davi I don't know, I don't know, I think (1.0) he could imagine it
 37 before, I think, because I feel all Zunis go to that church.
 38 Nazer In my opinion, before he didn't believe in this mythology, but
 39 then, when he saw the kachina, everything can trace to the
 40 kachina. So he asked Father Ingles and he went to him.
 41 Davi I think he's missing. Why? Because he knew that George was
 42 sort of crazy since the first moment. And he was walking with
 43 the Zuni. I think he could ask to, to, to Father Ingles for some
 44 information since the beginning, I think, I think. (1.0) Since
 45 he'd heard about the kachinas first time, he could go there to
 46 understand better.

Davi in the Blue Group tended to position himself as a facilitator of his group. He was a major contributor to his group discussions in that he often started an interaction by posing a big idea question and helped keep everyone on task during small-group discussions. Excerpt 7 shows that Davi (line 1) initiates a conversation with the frame marker "OK", which signals the shift to the student-student participation structure (Hellermann, 2008). Nazer in lines 2 through 4 responds by reading out loud the first question to his group members. The question, "What is the role of the Father Ingles in this story?" requires students to examine the role of Father Ingles in the plot development. Davi (lines 7 through 9) indicates that Father Ingles met several times with George and talked about Zuni kachinas and Catholic saints. Nazer takes up Davi's opinion and adds that Ernesto was afraid he had violated a Zuni taboo and went to the priest Ingles for confession. Davi and Nazer (lines 17 through 21) both agree that through Ingles, they finally knew George's motivation in searching for a sacred lake and the possible location of the lake.

In line 22, this group continues to discuss the second question on the list of discussion questions: “Why wasn’t Father Ingles asked about the vanish of George before this chapter?” This question requires students to draw inferences from the text with a specific focus on the characters’ situations and their decisions. Since the question was unclear, Jorge, in lines 30 through 31, repeated it himself in a low voice in order to clarify its meaning. This repetition overlaps the first part of Davi’s turn in line 28. The observation showed that this kind of repetition for clarification commonly occurred during student-student interactions. This repetition can be understood in two different respects: either some of the student-generated questions were grammatically inappropriate, or the questions required students to speculate higher levels of interpretations. Davi’s repetition of “I don’t know, I don’t know” (line 36) implies his uncertainty about whether “Leaphorn didn’t ask for some purpose”, or whether “he forgot” (line 32).

As discussed above, the student-student interactions in literature discussions characterized a form of “collective inquiry” in interpretations of text. They often went back and forth to the text for evidence of statements or facts. Excerpt 7 shows that there was extensive use of statements such as “I think” or “I don’t know”, both of which appeared to reflect either uncertainty or ambivalence in the text or partial understandings of text. Their pragmatic intent was to position the student’s own knowledge as tentative and invite others to respond to his or her ideas, which were open to elaboration, modification and confirmation by the group members. It appeared that this kind of position by the students facilitated the construction of ongoing negotiations between students, which made it possible to produce more discursive and longer stretches of discourse.

In regard to the teacher, Ms. Brown monitored the conversational progress of each group by standing off to the side and carefully sensed at which point to intervene in students' discussions. When she joined a group, she interacted with group members by moderating in her role as teacher and by simultaneously adopting the position of a co-participant in conversation so that some equality of participation could be achieved. She often joined by saying, "I didn't mean to interrupt you but", or "I am sorry, but what did you say?", and this stance assured that each group of students assumed strong responsibilities for the maintenance and progress of the discourse. Excerpt 8 shows an illustration of this type of situation and provides an example of how the teacher, both as a moderator and as a co-participant in the interaction, joins a small-group discussion during the *students doing the tasks* stage.

Excerpt 8 occurred during week seven when the Green Group (Steve, Aziz and Erzhan) had been discussing the chapters 12 to 14. These chapters deal with the aftermath of Shorty Bowlegs' death. Bowlegs, George's father, has been killed from behind by a weapon, perhaps the same one used to kill Ernesto Cata. Detective Leaphorn sees the pattern in the two murders and realizes that whoever killed the two men may be hunting George and Susanne too. Although Isaacs claims to love Susanne, he refuses to take her. Susanne nevertheless decides to join Leaphorn in the search for George because they believe that George is more likely to come out and talk to him if Susanne is with him.

Excerpt 8: *Students Doing the Tasks* Stage Episode (7.1)

((Green Group is sitting in a circle, facing each other))

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 01 | Aziz | Okay. <i>((reads a discussion question to his group))</i> Why do |
| 02 | | Isaac and Leaphorn have to protect Suzie? |
| 03 | Steve | I guess because (.) maybe she will be, I mean they would try to |
| 04 | | kill her. |

05 Aziz She's in danger. But Isaac didn't think that she is in danger.
06 Steve Leaphorn thinks that the next one would be, uh, Suzanne.
07 Leaphorn thinks that first they would try to kill, I think,
08 Suzanne or I forgot the guy's name.
09 Erzhan Reynolds.
10 Steve Uh? Reynolds. Yeah, they're dangerous because, (.) you know,
11 (1.0) the way that, I didn't know if you, if you noticed that
12 George's father died and the way that Cata died was similar and
13 Suzie thinks that a person is trying to (.) relate both deaths.
14 George's father's and Cata's death. The way they died was
15 similar. So, the person is trying to find George and killing him.
16 Aziz Ah, so, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think, I think he wants to reach
17 George by using Suzanne.
18 Steve Yeah. Suzanne is related.
19 Aziz Yeah, so George is the target but, but Suzanne is the tool. You
20 got it? ((*At this point, Aziz notices Ms. Brown nearby and*
21 *orients his posture to her*)) Is that correct? George is the target
22 but Suzanne is the tool? He uses Suzanne to reach George.
23 Steve I guess, maybe he's trying to kill the people who is [related to,
24 to]=
25 Erzhan ((*turns back to look at Ms. Brown and asks for help from her*))
26 =[What is the word,] when you fish, you put a what?
27 T ((*joins this group by answering Erzhan's question*)) Lure. The
28 lure.
29 Erzhan Lure? Do you think that Susanne is the lure? Leaphorn is like,
30 [using her]=
31 Steve [Yeah.]
32 Aziz =No, I mean that Leaphorn don't want the killer to reach
33 Suzanne.
34 T I think he is PROtecting Suzanne.
35 Aziz Yeah, yeah, he's protecting from, from the killer.
36 T But also, I think Erzhan's on to an interesting idea that he's
37 using Suza::nne, so that George would not be afraid.
38 SS ((*Steve and Erzhan both simultaneously respond*)) Who, who,
39 who?
40 T Leaphorn doesn't want George to be afraid. If he's afraid, he'll
41 run away and hide. And see, Suzanne maybe (1.0), so that's a
42 little different from the fish. You're trying to lure the fish to
43 destroy it, to eat it. He's trying to lure George but the purpose is
44 to rescue, not to (.) destroy.

In line 1, Aziz utters the frame marker “OK” (line 1) to call for attention to move to the next question. The question “Why do Isaac and Leaphorn have to protect Susie?” requires students to draw inferences from the text with a specific focus on the characters’ situations and their decisions. Steve’s responses in lines 3, 6, and 10 indicate that the killer’s identity and the patterns have been revealed to the readers. Aziz expands upon Steve’s responses by saying “I think he want to reach George by using Susanne” (line 13). At this point, Ms. Brown approaches and monitors the conversational progress of this group. As Aziz notices her presence, he invites her into their conversation by offering his interpretation of text “George is the target, but Susanne is the tool” (lines 21 through 22). Erzhan (line 26) asks for help from Ms. Brown in locating an appropriate word that describes Leaphorn’s decision to include Susanne in the search for George, and Ms. Brown offers the word “lure”, to him (line 27). As evidenced in lines 34, 36, and 40, when she joins a group, she does not directly evaluate students’ statements but adds her own opinions to the current discussion in a collaborative manner. Her use of “I think” as a preface to her response positions her as more of a fellow inquirer in the course of the ongoing construction of meanings.

In summary, Excerpts 8 illustrates that the student talk, while hesitant and ill-formed because it was authored (Goffman, 1981) in terms of interaction, was exploratory within continuing, negotiated construction of meaning, which was indicated by the comment “they’re dangerous because, you know, the way that, I didn’t know if you, if you noticed that George’s father’s died” (lines 10 through 12). They characteristically restated, refined and elaborated earlier statements of themselves or others and regularly consulted the text for evidence in support of the statements. In this way, the discussion tasks between students were jointly managed to build up meaning-making, as the goal of the tasks was collaboratively determined through interactions. The analysis showed that

the context of the *students doing the tasks* stage as well as the participatory and discursive patterns of exchange by which they were realized gave students opportunities to produce extended stretches of discourse.

STAGE 5: SHARING WITH THE CLASS

Subsequent to the *students doing the tasks* in groups, in which students worked with the discussion sheets, came the *sharing with the class* stage, in which the entire class shared their understandings that had been developed in groups. This *sharing with the class* stage lasted between 11 and 14 minutes on average (see Table 3) and created teacher-led, whole-class interactions. At the beginning of the course, Ms. Brown used this stage for scaffolding to fill the gaps in student comprehension. As students developed some degree of understandings and responded to the text with greater independent competence, extended exchanges between teacher and students were constructed to build up and expand meaning making.

Similar to the *review* stage, the typical practices during this *sharing* stage were marked by discussions of the plot development and character analysis as well as a definition of culture-specific words and concepts introduced in the text. In addition, Ms. Brown coordinated with supplemental texts such as books, pictures and texts from the Internet that might build up students' intertextual knowledge as resources. However, this *sharing* stage was particularly essential as it was intended to introduce, elaborate, or extend key topics and thematic points that might enhance students' interpretations of text, but that students in groups were not able to develop independently.

The topics that Ms. Brown coordinated during this *sharing* stage were, for example, prejudices and conflicts between the Zuni and the Navajos (field notes and

audio recordings, June 22, 2010) ; competing law enforcement jurisdictions in the murder case (field notes and audio recordings, June 29, 2010); Navajo detective Joe Leaphorn's view of logic and problem-solving (field notes and audio recordings, July 6, 2010); prejudices against several different ethnicities that affected the book's outcome (field notes and audio recordings, July 13, 2010); differences and similarities between the Zuni belief about the afterlife and the Navajo (field notes, and audio recordings July 20, 2010); two Zuni kachinas, Shalako and Salamobia, and conflicts between individual desire (field notes and audio recordings, July 27, 2010); and Ms. Brown's conclusive question "Is it satisfactory?" (field notes and audio recordings, August 3, 2010). Excerpt 9 shows an example of the teacher-fronted *sharing* stage of plot development discussions.

Excerpt 9 took place during week four. In this excerpt, the class had been discussing an Indian kachina introduced in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Detective Leaphorn saw a man wearing the mask of a Zuni kachina in the dark at the hippie commune. In the Zuni tradition, the Salamobia mask is seen only when one is about to die. Wearing such a mask for evil purposes is a sacrilege to the Zuni people, and such a sacrilege demands death. Up to this point, Leaphorn has no way of knowing that the killer is wearing the mask to disguise his identity.

Excerpt 9: *Sharing with the Class* Stage Episode (4.1)

((From Purple Group, she makes her way to the front of the class. She draws attention as she addresses the whole class. The whole class stops their talk and turns posture, facing the teacher.))

01	T	Okay. (1.0) Let's wind up our conversations here. (2.0) Maybe
02		let's talk all together about (.) anything useful or interesting or
03		some open questions that you'd like to explore all together? Is
04		there anything as you worked through these questions that
05		people created, any problems? Do you have a better sense of
06		what happened? Or are you still (.) not clear on something?

07 (1.0) Is it a kachina? I am not sure. I wonder what you all see.
 08 Is the mask, have we, have we met about two masks or one
 09 mask? Is the mask at the end of that first chapter the same mask
 10 that Leaphorn sees?
 11 Mariam No.
 12 T When I read the description, I was not totally sure. Were you
 13 sure? Is that the same mask?
 14 Mariam °No°
 15 T Did you read them? Do you know what I am asking?
 16 SS *((Several students simultaneously respond))* Yes. Yeah, yeah.
 17 T Then, what's the answer?
 18 Nazer *((asks help from his group))* What question?
 19 Jorge *((responds to his group))* °What do you think?° No one thought
 20 about it. Everybody thought that [it seems]=
 21 Davi =[I think, I think everyone]
 22 remembers the mask, but no one sees the question.
 23 T OK. I am not either. That's still my question. What we are
 24 talking about here? Is this a man? Is this a character we have
 25 not met yet? Except behind the mask? Was one a man and one a
 26 spirit? Or was the other? I don't, I wonder what it was. (3.0)
 27 Hmm. (1.0) Any other thoughts as open-ended problems? (1.0)
 28 From this group, anything?
 29 (3.0)
 30 Mariam They have (.) yellow eyes, yellow separate eyes.
 31 T Have any of you googled kachina? I think you did. (1.0) You
 32 googled kachina, right? Didn't I hear that you had googled
 33 Kachina?
 34 Nazer *((asks help from his group))* °What? What?° °I didn't get that
 35 question°.
 36 T Did (.) you (.) google (.) kachina?
 37 SS *((Several students simultaneously respond))* Ah, yeah, yeah,
 38 yeah.
 39 T So, when you read that word,=
 40 Nazer There were three definitions, the first is spirit, second is mask,
 41 and third is, uh, (1.0) doll, doll.
 42 T =So which one do you think is operating here? Did looking on
 43 the web help you (.) read what is happening in the story?

Excerpt 9 illustrates that a prolonged discussion of the kachina led to the whole-class interactions by the teacher. In line 1, as Ms. Brown sees that the small-group

discussions are almost completed, she calls for students' attention to shift participation structures and close the current small-group activity focus. The teacher's "OK" in line 1 signals a shift in participation structure back to a teacher-fronted activity focus. In lines 8 through 10, she prompts a question about a kachina by asking "Is the mask, have we, have we met about two masks or one mask?" Up to this point, the story with the plot and characters has not been well developed. Although the reader learns of two masks, it is not clear whether these were the same and whether they were spirits or men. When Ms. Brown poses this question in lines 7 through 10, students acknowledge that they did not notice a connection between the previous knowledge about the kachinas. This lack of noticing is evidenced by her second comprehension check, "Do you know what I am asking?" in line 15 and students' limited responses such as "Yes. Yeah, yeah" (line 16); "No one thought about it. Everybody thought that it seems" (lines 19 through 20); and "I think everyone remembers the mask, but no one sees the question" (line 22). Nazer's talk of the kachina (lines 40 through 41) to his group indicates that students' thinking did not develop beyond the level of literal recall.

The observation showed that the students at this stage oriented to the front of the class where the teacher is positioned while still remaining seated at their desks within their groups. Accordingly, the talk exchange by the students was simultaneously directed to both their group members and the whole class, which was evidenced in Nazer's requests for clarification to his group in lines 18 through 34 and Jorge's evaluating remark to his group in lines 19 through 20. The resulting talk became overlapping and multi-layered, which characterized the *sharing* stage.

Excerpt 9 occurred at the beginning of the course and indicated that students' knowledge of the plot and characters had not been well developed. While the conversation prompted students to make connections and inferences beyond the text,

student responses were limited with minimal utterances and involved longer pauses between turns. In the excerpt, Ms. Brown's questions were genuine, and she mentioned asking questions that students had not thought through completely. It appeared that the conversation led by the teacher prompted students to engage in exploring new concepts in the text and her stance of "I don't know" allowed their knowledge to be recalibrated through talk with others. Excerpt 10 illustrates how Ms. Brown's coordination of plot development discussions made available an opportunity for students to engage in more open-ended and expanded meaning-making.

Excerpt 10 took place during week nine, and in this excerpt, the class had been discussing the final chapters 18 through 20. In these chapters, the author finally resolves the puzzle of why Ernesto, George, and George's father had to die. Throughout the story, the author Hillerman demonstrates the conflict between individual desire and societal and cultural limits. Isaacs is willing to sacrifice Susanne's safety for his reputation, while George wants to leave behind his Navajo traditions in favor of the Zuni belief system. Reynolds uses George's desire to trick him, and appears to him as a Zuni god to murder him. Zuni men take justice into their own hands, killing Reynolds for his sacrilege and for having murdered one of their own.

Excerpt 10: *Sharing with the Class* Stage Episode (9.1)

((Purple Group is sitting in a circle. Ms. Brown looks at this group nearby and listens to their talk.))

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 01 | T | <i>((approaches the Purple Group))</i> OK. You're finished? I am so |
| 02 | | curious. What did you say? What about the last? (.)What do you |
| 03 | | think [the story's about?]= |
| 04 | Mariam | =[This is a story about the relationship between tribes and it |
| 05 | | also describes how, how human can be rude and how he can |
| 06 | | make some bad things for his career for some evil purposes. |
| 07 | T | Yeah, the whole character of Isaacs seems to be really |

08 important. Uh, (.) we've got all these young men. We've got a
09 young Zuni and a young Navajo. And Isaacs is a young white
10 man. We've got THRee belief systems. We've got the Zuni
11 belief system=
12 Nia Navajo.
13 T =George's belief system, Isaacs' belief system, (1.0) and then
14 we've got what they do. (2.0) °Anyway°, do you think there's a
15 sense of justice in this book? Do you end up feeling (.)
16 annoyed? Has justice happened? Is, is the ending satisfactory
17 [or unsatisfactory?]
18 SS *((Nia and Mariam both simultaneously respond to the teacher))*
19 No. [No, unsatisfactory.]
20 Auken [I think both,] because satisfactory when it's like, how
21 Leaphorn solves all this, uh, all this mystery, who killed George
22 and Cata boy. But unsatisfactory is, uh, the way of
23 accumulating Reynolds, how he wanted in terms of being
24 famous, he just turns upside down all the situation. I thought [it
25 is dishonest]=
26 T =[But] but he ends up dead.
27 Nia And [because]=
28 Auken =[But, but I think] he deserves his death.
29 T I AGREE, so that's satisfactory.
30 SS *((Nia, Mariam and Auken all simultaneously respond))* Yeah.
31 Yeah.
32 T It is Okay with me.
33 Steve *((interrupts Ms. Brown as he turns toward her))* It's okay for
34 you?
35 T *((orients her posture to the whole class and asks))* Hahaha, is it
36 okay with you? So we are talking about what this novel is
37 about? Is there any sense in which it's about justice? Or do you
38 end up feeling at the end of the novel, hey, there's no justice in
39 the world? Does the novel lead you satisfied or dissatisfied?
40 SS *((Several students respond with laughter))* Both, both, hah hah
41 hah.
42 Steve I didn't like the fact that who got George died, but=
43 T =But George was lonely and he was crazy, and no one could
44 take care of him.
45 Davi No, it's not the way we would like, but I like it.
46 Auken Maybe [I think he should]=
47 Davi =[If it is a happy] ending, it could be much better.
48 SS *((All students respond with laughter))* Hah, hah, hah.
49 T It couldn't be a happy ending. We don't have a happy ending.
50 But it is also, do you think there's some kind of sense of

51 balance here?=
 52 SS ((*Several students respond*)) Yeah. It has a lot of balance.
 53 =Harmony at the end? I mean it's not joy. We are not talking
 54 T happiness. We are not going to hear wedding bells. I don't think
 55 they thought, oh, Suzanne and Isaacs will get married. Not in
 56 my idea, not in my brain. I don't think Isaacs can love. I
 57 wouldn't want her to marry him. I am on her side. Would you
 58 want her to marry that (.) selfish fellow? He can't love.
 59 Auken Maybe he can change his mind.
 60 T Do you think he can change?
 61 Nia I don't know. I'm just predicting. Heh.
 62 Steve ((*turns back to look at Auken*)) Be careful with this guy. Guys
 63 are bad. Be careful. He won't change. [He won't, he won't
 64 change.]
 65 T [Do you think so?] Could Isaacs live a happy life?
 66 Davi I don't know.
 67 Auken ((*responds to Steve*)) OK. [I will think about the advice in my
 68 future.]
 69 Davi ((*responds to Ms. Brown*))[There's a kind of harmony here] in
 70 this end because he died, and he can, he can like achieve
 71 something.
 72 SS ((*All students respond with laughter*)) Heh, heh, heh.

In Excerpt 10, the conversation between teacher and students centers on their perceptions of the characters' actions and the outcome of the novel. In line 1, as Ms. Brown notices that the Purple Group's discussion is almost complete, she approaches this group to share interpretations by asking, "What do you think the story's about?" Mariam in line 3 responds by giving a brief plot summary. Ms. Brown responds positively to her (line 7) and extends the exchange with the question of how the individual choice of belief systems eventually affected the book's outcome. With respect to the teacher's concluding question, "Is the ending satisfactory?" (line 16), students' responses varied at first, as seen in "No, unsatisfactory" (line 19) and "I think both" (line 20). Auken indicates that it is satisfactory that Detective Leaphorn finally figured out the murder case, but that it is unsatisfactory that Dr. Reynolds sacrificed a total of three lives to save his professional

reputation. But with Reynolds dead, Auken enhances her claim “But, but I think he deserves his death” (line 28). Ms. Brown takes up her opinion by offering her own view, “so that’s satisfactory” (line 29) and “It is okay with me” (line 32). The other two students change their response with “yeah, yeah” (line 30). In line 33, Steve in the Green Group orients his posture to the Purple Group and interrupts to join the discussion. Ms. Brown (line 35) invites him and the whole class into the current discussion to share what they learned during group discussions, which created the *sharing with the class* stage. Ms. Brown, moving to the front of the class and facing the students, poses the same question to the whole class. From her elaboration on “what this novel is about” (lines 36 through 37), students respond by saying “both”; that is, “I didn’t like the fact that who got George died” (line 42) and “but I like it” (line 45). In lines 53 through 58, Ms. Brown further attempts to connect the characters and their actions to the students’ life experiences. Students responded in various ways, and, at this point, overlapping and multi-directed teacher-student and student-student exchanges (lines 59 through 72) occurred, indicating that students were actively engaged in talking about the text. In this way, their understandings of the text evolved and changed through discussion.

As Excerpt 10 illustrates, the analysis of teacher-student exchanges indicated that the directionality of talk flowed from the teacher to the students and back to the teacher and student-student. The incidences of overlapping talk, multi-directed exchanges and the completion of one another’s contributions all suggest that students were now more engaged in the joint construction of knowledge. The nature of the teacher’s big idea questions — “What is this story about?” “Is the ending satisfactory?” “Do you think there’s some kind of sense of balance here?” — prompted students to construct extended, longer stretches of talk exchanges in the meaning-making process.

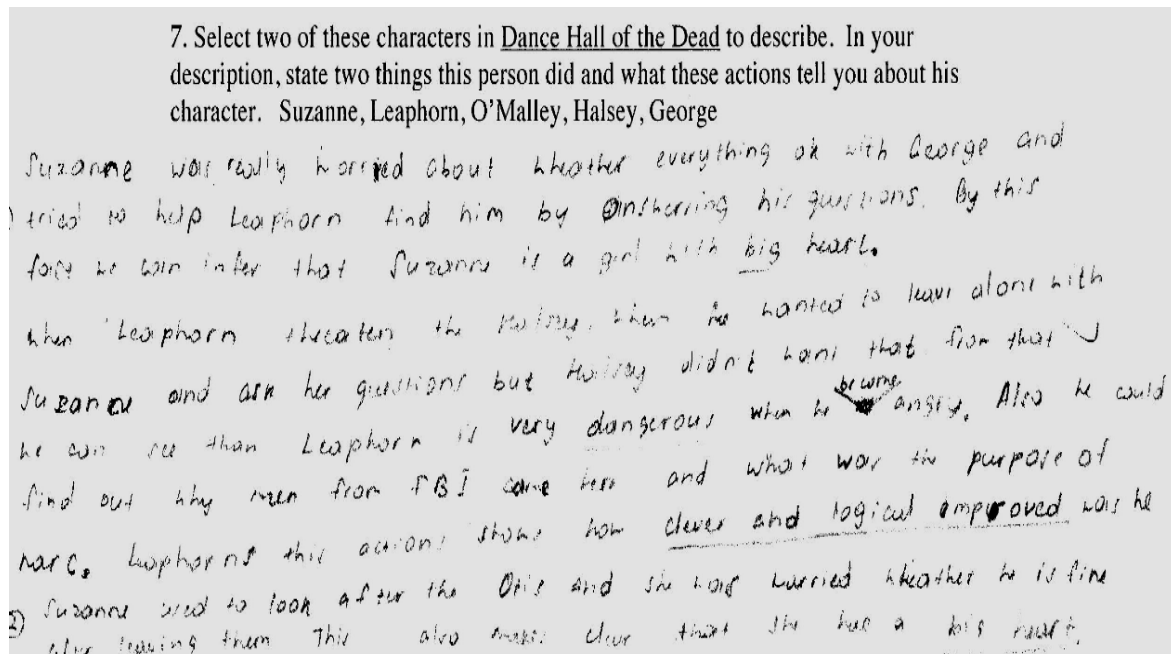
In summary, the *sharing with the class* stage created teacher-fronted whole-class interactions, in which interpretations of the text were shared by the entire class. During the *sharing* stage, the teacher remained in control of the discourse, and this meant that the conversations centered on teacher-driven topics to be explored. The analysis indicates that the interactional boundaries were much more relaxed despite their IRE sequence. The reciprocal and dialogic forms of talk between the teacher and students decentered the teacher's position as the evaluator of student responses.

STAGE 6: TAKING IN-CLASS QUIZZES

The activity cycle finally culminated in a quiz, which took the form of feedback. The post-lesson interviews with Ms. Brown and the observations indicated that this *in-class quiz* stage worked as feedback to keep all the students on track with plot basics and character analysis. To the teacher, this *quiz* stage provided feedback that she could use to assess student performance for informing instructional decision-making while teaching and adjusting the lessons as needed. For example, according to the results, the *review* or *sharing* stages were strategically extended by the teacher to facilitate students' understanding of text (see Table 3).

This *quiz* stage took place every Thursday, and during this stage students were required to complete a quiz that was a short form of a reading response journal. The quiz items were typically taken from the questions that the class had probed in previous discussions. Sometimes, however, Ms. Brown combined one or two questions to form new ones. In the quiz items, students were asked to summarize the main ideas of the story or explain how they had felt about the characters and their actions. Therefore, the *in-class quiz* stage provided a space towards the shared discourse of the topic discussed

previously. The following example shows the written text taken from Nazer's quiz sheet (student artifact, July 6, 2010).



(Nazer's note: Suzanne was really worried about whether everything ok with George and tried to help Leaphorn find him by answering his questions. By this fact we can infer that Suzanne is a girl with big heart. When Leaphorn threaten the Halsey when he wanted to leave alone with Suzanne and ask her questions but Halsey didn't want that from that, we can see than Leaphorn is very dangerous when he become angry. Also he could find out why men from FBI came here and what was the purpose of narc. For Leaphorn, this action shows how clever and logical improved was he. Suzanne tried to look after the Otis and she was worried whether he is fine after leaving them. This also makes clear that she has a big heart.)

First Research Question Summary

In this chapter, in an attempt to answer the first research question, "What are the ways that activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom?" which explored the structure of literature

discussions, I documented and examined the classroom talk about the text that occurred at the level of episodes. I broadly identified six stages in the structure which constituted a cycle of activity. Representative episodes were selected for each stage to explore the nature of ESL students' literature discussions in more detail.

My analysis showed that the staged, goal-oriented teaching and learning processes in the literature discussions had a close alignment with the particular patterns of interaction that allowed for the construction of different scripts of classroom discourse. The patterning of interactions changed considerably from one stage to the next within the activity cycle, and as the excerpts indicated, this sequenced structure allowed for a shifting of positions between the teacher and students. The analysis indicated that there was a marked difference in the way Ms. Brown assumed various positions at different stages. For example, because the reciprocal and dialogic forms of talk that the teacher-fronted, whole-class interactions worked to generate decentered the teacher's position as the evaluator of student responses, the students were able to position themselves as the knower in interpretations of the text. When Ms. Brown joined student-to-student interactions, while still in her role as a facilitator of the group talk, she simultaneously adopted the position of a co-participant in the conversation so that some equality of participation could be achieved. This way of engaging with the class implicitly embodied a view of knowledge as co-constructed and negotiable rather than discrete and given. The resultant discourse became interpersonally more symmetrical in terms of who was positioned as the knower in the knowledge construction process.

CHAPTER V:

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT TALK

The purpose of the study is to describe and understand young adult ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom at a university-affiliated ELP program. In this chapter I address the findings for the second research question, "What are the nature and characteristics of talk generated by ESL students in literature discussions?" which examines the nature and quality of student talk as revealed through interactively constructed talk among students.

Talk about the Text: The Analysis of Student Talk

While the focus of Chapter 4 is on the discourse that the teacher and students produced together across the semester, Chapter 5 focuses on the nature and quality of the talk among the students during the *students doing the tasks* stage within each activity cycle, specifically.

The unit of work for analysis involved seven literature discussion sessions (70 to 80 minutes per session), which were carried out over the seven weeks of the course (see Table 2 for the course of the literature discussions). The major concern was whether the students were observed engaging in an extended and sustained discourse that led to a shared and purposeful build up of knowledge and understanding. In order to investigate this concern, I adapted the following criteria of Boyd (2011) and Boyd and Rubin (2002) as an analytic framework: (1) elaboration of talk that extends and enhances meaning making; (2) coherence — evidence of building upon the previous utterances; and (3) social engagement — evidence of uptake (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991) of dialogic

participation. According to Boyd (2011) and Boyd and Rubin (2002), social engagement reflects students' ability to participate in collaborative inquiry with a community of learners who build upon one other's contributions as they collectively address learning objectives. Coherence is important because it signals an ability to extend and elaborate a topic across chunks of discourse of a speaker's own turn as well as multiple turns taken by other members of the class.

In the following sections, I therefore describe and interpret the nature of student talk that occurred during the *students doing the tasks* stage within each activity cycle. The excerpts that were selected occurred at three time points in the class period: (1) near the beginning, (2) in the middle of the period, and (3) at the end of the course of the literature discussions, along with an analysis of each in terms of elaboration, coherence, and uptake. The excerpts selected for representative, illustrative examples that characterized these three points are presented in the following sections.

***STUDENTS DOING THE TASKS* STAGE IN ACTIVITY CYCLE**

As identified in Chapter 4, the structure of the literature discussions consisted of six stages of activity cycle. The analysis of Chapter 4 centers more on the stages of *setting up* and *review*, *students redefining the tasks*, *students doing the tasks*, and *sharing with the class*, which could feature the interaction patterns between the teacher and students. Following the *review* stage led by the teacher, the students moved into small groups of three to conduct the literature discussions by working with the list of discussion questions. Subsequent to the *students redefining the tasks* stage, in which the students explored aspects of the discussion tasks and negotiated the way they worked together, came the *students doing the tasks* stage on which the analysis of Chapter 5 centers.

The *students doing the tasks* stage included small groups of student-to-student exchanges within each activity cycle. Small groups of seating arrangement in a circle delivered an important message to students, i.e., that the four discussion tasks (character analysis, plot development, favorite passages, and discussion questions) were to be completed by group members with strong responsibilities. During this stage, the students acted as the knowers in interpretations of the text. The ‘knower’ (Berry, 1982; Johnston, 2004) in this study refers to the person who is in the position to answer questions and make comments. The position of knower was shared by group members, and it indicated that students’ statements or comments could be affirmed or denied, modified or elaborated by other members. The teacher usually acted as a member of each group, yet she was also the facilitator of the each group’s progress.

What students wanted to talk about was largely established during the *reading at home* stage, which allowed for individual pre-preparation for discussions. The control and direction of the discourse was determined by the students themselves, and there were no right or wrong answers in interpretations of the text. If students’ understandings were not appropriately developed, they were assisted by the teacher and the whole class during the next *sharing with the class* stage. For the most part, the *students doing the tasks* stage created a lot of room for digression, whether it was dealing with procedural matters of the tasks, talking through details of the story, or even engaging in “off-task social talk” (Markee, 2005).

The expectation was that this student-initiated *doing the tasks* stage would feature more discursive and extended talk as the students were encouraged to construct meanings collaboratively and engage in interactive discourse with one another. As stated in Chapter 4, the discussions took the form of a “collective inquiry” (Lindfors, 1999; Martínez-

Roldán, 2005), as students were willing to acknowledge uncertainty and elicit others' help for understandings of the text.

Talk about the Text at the Beginning

In this section, I describe the nature and characteristics of student talk that occurred near the beginning of the course of the literature discussions, along with an analysis in terms of elaboration, coherence, and uptake.

In the beginning chapters of *Dance Hall of the Dead*, a 1973 mystery novel by Tony Hillerman, the author provides scene and setting information that is important to the entire book. As I stated in Chapter 4, Hillerman combines elements of several forms of fiction in the novel, including ethnic fiction, detective fiction, the police procedural, etc. The analysis of the beginning stage of the literature discussions indicates that the students' responses and discussions mainly focused on the detective fiction that tracks the murder case. They were limited to the details of the scene and setting offered in the first few chapters. Most comments addressed the plot and clarified the content of the story to ensure that basic information about the text was understood. Excerpt 11 illustrates one type of situation in which this kind of talk occurred. The beginning chapters of the novel describe Detective Leaphorn's investigation into Ernesto Cata's murder. In these chapters, Cata is presumed dead, and the police suspect his missing friend George is the killer. While Cata's disappearance is in Zuni jurisdiction, Leaphorn is asked to find George. The investigation takes him first from Susanne's hippie commune to Isaacs' archaeological dig site to get information about George.

Excerpt 11: *Students Doing the Tasks* Stage Episode (4.1)

((The Green Group is sitting in a circle and looking at their handouts. They are quiet and hesitant to start a discussion. Ahmad raises his gaze from the handout to see whether his group members are ready to start.))

- 01 Ahmad *((reads a discussion question to his group))* Do you believe that
02 George killed Cata?
03 Aziz I don't know. (1.0) Maybe someone, maybe George.
04 Ahmad **We can't answer the question.**
05 Aziz **We can't answer the question.**
06 Erzhan **It is an opinion question.**
07 SS *((Aziz and Ahmad both simultaneously respond))* **It's an**
08 **opinion question. It's an opinion question.**
09 Aziz Yeah, I think **he did**.
10 Steve **He did?**
11 Aziz **He killed him. Why he ran away? Why he ran away?**
12 Aziz *((reads a discussion question to his group))* OK. **Do you think**
13 Leaphorn is close to find the boys? **I think** almost. **I think** the
14 key is Susanne.
15 Ahmad And what about the researcher?
16 Aziz **Isaacs?**
17 Ahmad Yeah, **Isaacs**.
18 Aziz I mean **Isaacs** gives the information that he had, but=
19 Ahmad **He said** nothing was stolen from the place.
20 Aziz =[Yeah,] but **he told that he didn't see the missing boys.**
21 Ahmad [Yeah,] **he didn't see them for a while.**
22 Aziz He went to Jason's Fleece where, uh, Suzanne lives. He told
23 them that George liked the girl. I mean, **he is close to find the**
24 **boys.**
25 Erzhan I think **he is not close to find the boys.**=
26 Aziz Why?
27 Ahmad [I think so.] **He is not close.**
28 Erzhan =[Because,] if you see who is the killer, the book is ended.
29 Ahmad Yeah, heh, heh, that is the answer.
30 Steve But also, but also, he can find the boys, and other people can
31 disappear. **We don't know.**
32 Ahmad Yeah, **we don't know.**
33 Erzhan Maybe, maybe he will find them in killing. Uh, the conclusion
34 will be they're together.

Excerpt 11 took place during the second session of the literature discussions, and in this excerpt, the Green Group (Aziz, Ahmad, Steve, Erzhan) had been discussing Leaphorn's investigation into Ernesto Cata's murder. Excerpt 11 began with a question about whether George had killed his friend Cata. This question asks students to make inferences from the text. Aziz's comment "I don't know. Maybe someone, maybe George" (line 3) implies both that he acknowledged partial understandings of the text and that enough information had not yet been offered. Ahmad's response, "We can't answer the question," (line 4) and Erzhan's response, "It is an opinion question," (line 6) suggest the current tentative stance in their understanding of the mystery. Aziz, in line 5, repeats Ahmad's previous comment, and Ahmad and Aziz also echo Erzhan's previous words by way of showing confirmation.

The second question, "Do you think Leaphorn is close to find the boys?" (lines 12 and 13) centers on students' inferences from the text. In terms of the plot, Ernesto's murder is a central event in the novel, and all of the events of the plot develop from this initial event. Thus, most of the questions concerned students' inferences with respect to the plot. Aziz infers, "I think the key is Susanne" (line 14), implying that Susanne might know where George is. In line 19, Ahmad connects Aziz's comment to add that new information was revealed by Isaacs, and Aziz completes Ahmad's sentence by adding his opinion. Ahmad (line 21) repeats Aziz's words again to confirm. Erzhan, in line 25, challenges their comments and offers different ideas by saying, "I think he is not close to find the boys." He is using his own prior knowledge to defend his claim. Erzhan's comment is followed by Ahmad's (line 27) repetition to show his agreement with the point. Steve's (line 31) and Ahmad's (line 32) "we don't know," just like Ahmad's (line 4) and Aziz's (line 5) "We can't answer the question," all indicate that knowledge building is acknowledged as provisional and judgment is reserved.

It is important to note that Excerpt 11 shows the pervasive presence of repetitions in interaction, which was commonly observed in the students' discourse in Ms. Brown's classroom. The analysis reveals that as they work to examine each discussion question, Aziz tends to hold the floor and emphasizes his points through frequent self-repetition (i.e., a speaker repeat his words) and other-repetition (i.e., a speaker picks up and repeats the previous speaker's words or phrases). In various turns, students like Ahmad also echo and animate the previous speakers' ideas and phrases. In the excerpt above, instances of other-repetition are in boldface; some of these utterances can also be considered instances of self-repetition.

From a functional view, repetitions may convey different kinds of meanings in interaction. According to Tannen (1989), the overarching function of repetition as a form of cooperative overlapping talk is the establishment of coherence and of interpersonal involvement in discourse. Rydland and Aukrust (2005) suggest that self-repetition relates to frequency of oral participation, and other-repetition allows the second language learners to participate in extended discourse in L2. In a similar vein, Duff (2000) argues that repetitions have an impact on both socialization and knowledge construction for second language learners. What can be understood in Excerpt 11 is that far from being the limited linguistic and knowledge resources that the beginning stage of their literature discussions affords, repetitions are a communicative strategy employed by the students at the interpersonal level as they collaborate on the tasks.

It appears that the students' repetitions are ways of response to or elaboration on what is said as well as ways of expressing (dis)agreement about ideas and opinions offered by others. More importantly, the re-use of the words or phrases and ideas of the previous speakers in conversation appears to contribute coherence to what has been said. Therefore, the repetition of talk at these lexical, semantic, and syntactic levels across

turns is characteristic of the student talk, as with overlapping and latching between utterances in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom, and it serves to build collaborative construction of meaning in student-to-student exchanges.

Another characteristic of the beginning stage of the literature discussions was that the students spent more time on the procedural matters than on the tasks. There were longer pauses between turns since they needed time to acquire familiarity with ways of talking and accomplishing the tasks. Excerpt 12 illustrates this kind of negotiation between students.

Excerpt 12: *Students Doing the Tasks* Stage Episode (4.1)

((Green Group is sitting in a circle. Aziz turns his gaze to Steve. Aziz is looking at his handout.))

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 01 | Aziz | <i>((looks at his group members))</i> Let's talk about the characters. |
| 02 | | (2.0) |
| 03 | Steve | Oh, where? |
| 04 | | (1.0) |
| 05 | Aziz | Okay. <i>((looks down at Steve's handout and points to the sentence on it))</i> Here. Who are the people in the plot do you |
| 06 | | think? How many people are there? |
| 07 | | |
| 08 | Steve | Where? |
| 09 | Aziz | I mean in the plot, (.) in the first chapter. |
| 10 | Steve | We, we have to, we have to, uh, answer this question or this |
| 11 | | question? |
| 12 | Aziz | Well, let's talk about the characters and then answer the |
| 13 | | question. |
| 14 | Steve | Talk about the characters? |
| 15 | Aziz | Yeah. It's up to you. (2.0) I think there is George (1.0), uh, |
| 16 | | Salamobia= |
| 17 | Steve | =Wait, wait. Some stuff here. |

Excerpt 12 illustrates that the students are engaged in the procedural matters on how they approach the discussion tasks at hand. In this excerpt, Aziz holds the floor by

leading the discussion. Information is transmitted from Aziz to Steve and to his group members. The resulting interaction between students shifts to a new participation structure from one student to his peer as he scaffolds his group with the task procedures. The excerpt also indicates that the students still felt uncomfortable with dealing with the tasks. My observation notes reflect this situation:

Each group comes to the *doing the tasks* stage, but they're silent too often, and there are long pauses between turns and discussion questions. They seem to have difficulties in both processing the text and dealing with the tasks at hand. It is somewhat doubtful that they have really read and comprehended the novel. (field notes, June 13, 2010)

In summary, the talk by the students at the beginning stage of the literature discussions tended to communicate basic information about the text, which indicates that their discussions remained at a superficial level of understanding. The content of their conversations in each group focused more on the descriptions of the storyline; for example, what happened in the story and who was in the story rather than on character analysis or thematic points introduced by the author. The talk among students tended to involve animated exchanges of ideas or opinions by other members, and deeper responses were limited.

Talk about the Text in the Middle

In this section, I describe the nature and characteristics of student talk that occurred in the middle of the course of the literature discussions, with an analysis in terms of elaboration, coherence, and uptake.

While students read and discussed with animated voices and showed enthusiasm about the content of the text at the beginning stage of the literature discussions, they were more likely to share personal connections, opinions, and questions that stemmed from their understandings of the novel in the middle stage of the course. They engaged in interactive discourse by making inferences about characters and plot and by presenting a range of ideas and opinions for consideration. Excerpt 13 illustrates an example of this characteristic of interactive student talk. Excerpt 13 took place during the fourth session of the literature discussions, and in this excerpt the Green Group (Aziz, Ahmad, Steve, Erzhan) was discussing chapters 9 through 11. These chapters deal with the aftermath of Shorty Bowlegs' death. Leaphorn found the pattern involved in the double homicide. He thinks that even as George hunts for his kachina, the killer is hunting him too. He hurries toward Jason's Fleece, hoping to get more information from Suzanne.

Excerpt 13: *Students Doing the Tasks Stage Episode (6.1)*

((Green Group is sitting in a circle. Ahmad raises his gaze from the handout and looks at his group members. Aziz nods his head, turning his gaze to Ahmad.))

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 01 | Ahmad | <i>((reads a discussion question to his group))</i> Why was Leaphorn |
| 02 | | hurrying and impatient in Chapter ten? |
| 03 | Aziz | I think this is a good question. (1.0) I don't know the answer, to |
| 04 | | be honest. Something reminded him and he was hurrying up. |
| 05 | | [At the end of Chapter ten]= |
| 06 | Steve | =[He, uh, he was thinking] someone was trying to hunt George. |
| 07 | | So he got hurried. Something was almost suddenly hunting him. |
| 08 | | So Leaphorn was thinking why he was hunting George. |
| 09 | Aziz | So, WHY? |
| 10 | Steve | WHY, <u>WHY</u> is someone trying to hunt George? And WHY? |
| 11 | Aziz | I think it is related to the kachina. I don't know. I don't know. |
| 12 | Erzhan | <i>((reads a discussion question to his group))</i> Do you think that |
| 13 | | Suzanne knows where George is? |
| 14 | Steve | Yes. That's my question. Do you think? |
| 15 | Aziz | I think she knows where George is. He is hiding somewhere. |
| 16 | Erzhan | Why do you think Suzanne knows where George is? What |

17 evidence do you have? What, do you have a clue? What kind of
 18 clue do you have?
 19 (2.0)
 20 Ahmad No. I have no idea.
 21 Erzhan I have a clue.
 22 Steve You have a clue?
 23 Erzhan Do you remember when Leaphorn in Chapter eleven asked her
 24 to come with him? And she said that she wanted to stay. So I
 25 think she, she told it for some purpose and she wants to stay
 26 there because she was taking care of George. He, uh, in the
 27 evenings maybe he comes to her and eats some food.
 28 Aziz I mean, why didn't Leaphorn put a spy (.) at Jason's fleece?
 29 Ahmad I think Leaphorn hasn't got enough (.) uh information.
 30 Steve On the other hand, yeah, your clue, it's really good. But don't
 31 you think that they would risk George's secret place if George
 32 would come to Suzanne's place? If Suzanne would come there
 33 at this time, you know, Leaphorn could have stayed instead of
 34 gone. And if Leaphorn knows the place that Suzanne is, and
 35 Leaphorn could go to this place, I guess George wouldn't go
 36 there (.) because he doesn't want to be caught.
 37 Erzhan But do you see that when Leaphorn for a second time came
 38 there in Chapter eleven? He asked Halsey where Suzanne was.
 39 He, uh, refused to answer. And then, and only then, he said that
 40 he wants some time for George and Suzanne to talk or maybe
 41 (.) discuss something. And then, and then he said that Suzanne
 42 was up there. And then they went there, and Suzanne was
 43 sitting there. What was she doing there? All alone? She was just
 44 sitting there and thinking. I think, I think she met George up
 45 there.
 46 Steve I don't know if George would risk going somewhere that
 47 Leaphorn knows, and where Leaphorn goes (.) to investigate
 48 cause, (.) maybe=
 49 Erzhan =I think we have different opinions and we've come to different
 50 conclusions.
 51 Steve Who, who gets the same, same answers? heh heh heh.

In Excerpt 13, the conversation centers on the students' inferences to construct new meanings about characters and plot. In line 1, Ahmad read the first question, "Why was Leaphorn hurrying and impatient in Chapter ten?," to his group. This question

prompts students to infer and process the text with higher-order thinking beyond decoding the text. Aziz's first response to this question is hesitant as he acknowledges his uncertainty by saying "I don't know the answer, to be honest" (line 3). Steve offers textual information that the killer is hunting George and further poses his own question by saying, "why he was hunting George?" (line 8). In line 9, Aziz briefly responds to Steve's question, and Steve again restates what he has just said, signaling his emphasis that they should continue to think about it. Aziz responds to this question by adding his idea: "I think it is related to the kachina" (line 11). But his subsequent acknowledgement, "I don't know" implies either of the related ambiguities here: whether it is lack of confidence in his comprehension, or additional information should be required for further interpretation.

The second question, "Do you think that Susanne knows where George is?" (line 13), also requires students to infer and process the text with higher-order thinking beyond the literal recall. Aziz, in line 15, responds by agreeing that Susanne knows where he is. Importantly, Erzhan attempts to connect textual information and shows expanding statements through elaborating, and his comments involve reasoning for his claim across turns, which is evidenced in instances of elaboration of his points and enhancement with a "because" clause as in line 26. He clarifies for himself by restating and elaborating on his earlier comments, while moderating his stance with "I think" or "maybe" in a number of places (lines 25, 27, and 44).

Excerpt 13 illustrates that there is a back-and-forth type of negotiation between students in the knowledge construction process. The students are building on one other's ideas and extending the meaning of the text across turns. In a series of the turns, the students' talk was characterized by uncertainty, as evidenced with Aziz's "I don't know" and Steve's "that's my question" or "why," which indicate their acknowledgement of not

knowing. The discussion questions with which they worked often steered conversations to extend their thinking beyond the text. The students responded with expressions of uncertainty or with further questions in more tentative and modalized terms, as evidenced with “I think” or “maybe.” Most often, inferences were centered on constructing new meanings and knowledge of the text.

The analysis of the middle stage of the literature discussions revealed that while digging deeper into more textual knowledge, the students also started to analyze and evaluate the text and offer emotional comments or opinions on the analysis process. There were indications that the students co-constructed and reflected on knowledge and situated themselves toward that knowledge. The resulting talk was tentative and self-reflective, featuring meta-discourse that included comments on their own talk, the talk of others and talk about the text (Wallace, 2003). The following comments by the students illustrate the examples, all of which occurred in the middle stage of the literature discussions:

- (1) I didn’t pay attention to this part, I mean chapter ten (transcript and audio recordings, July 13, 2010).
- (2) I can’t say I like this. I mean, in my country, we don’t have this kind of hunting (transcript and audio recordings, July 13, 2010).
- (3) This question is interesting. We still eat by hand. Davi has interesting questions all the time (transcript and audio recordings, July 20, 2010).
- (4) I think we answered this question. This question is similar to Auken’s question and Nazer’s question. It is simple to answer. So let’s skip (transcript and audio recordings, July 20, 2010).
- (5) I like this part. I like the first three questions (transcript and audio recordings, July 20, 2010).

These kinds of meta-comments were uttered frequently throughout the course of the literature discussions. The analysis shows that meta-comments led to a more dialogic inter-animation of voices or connections between the students themselves and the text (Bakhtin, 1986; Lotman, 1990), indicating that students are engaging, comprehending and interpreting the text to make new meanings. Their thinking is visible as they are evaluating their progress with respect to task accomplishments. Observations and interviews with students confirmed this finding. In an informal interview with me, Auken, for example, stated:

At first, this book was difficult to understand. There were vocabulary and cultural things that I couldn't understand. I mean, Indian cultures or language in the book. For example, Little Fire God was unfamiliar to me and it needs information about the culture. But soon I became familiar. I can understand what is happening in the story. (Auken, informal interview, July 13, 2010)

Auken's comments indicate that she felt some distance between herself and the text at the beginning of reading the novel. The analysis of the middle stage of the literature discussions shows that there was a growth of understanding, more generally about the nature of the text and features of the language. It also indicates that the students became more comfortable with the reading and discussion tasks. Pauses or silence between turns were reduced as the students worked actively with the tasks.

In summary, in the middle of the course of the literature discussions, the analysis showed that the students were more likely to engage in extended talk as they sought to construct knowledge and connect it to students' own experiences. The excerpts illustrated here were selected from many episodes in which the students' talk involved reciprocal interaction and negotiation. The students were able to generate extended formulations of

meaning by echoing one other, asking new questions, challenging what others had said, elaborating on earlier comments and completing one other's statements. Therefore, the student-to-student interactions were usually sustained over several turns.

Talk about the Text at the End

In this section, I describe the nature and characteristics of student talk that occurred at the end of the course of the literature discussions, with an analysis in terms of elaboration, coherence, and uptake.

By comparison, the middle and the end of the course of the literature discussions proceeded similarly in terms of ways of talk and interaction. The students acquired familiarity with ways of talking and accomplishing the tasks. They were communicating basic information about the text, but simultaneously, there was an interaction between their own voices and those of the text as the students inferred new meanings about the text and connected them to their own experiences and values. For example, they were beginning to evaluate characters' actions and decisions and express their feelings about the situations depicted in the text. By talking about the details of the plot, characters, and setting in the text, students demonstrated that they understood that these elements were an important part of understanding this mystery novel. The discourse was jointly constructed and evidenced in the overlapping, latching between utterances, the echoing of one another and the completing of one another's contributions. The following segments illustrate one type of situation in which this process occurred.

Excerpt 14 took place during the seventh session of the literature discussions, and in this excerpt the Blue Group (Nazer, Jorge, Davi) was discussing the final chapters 18 through 20. The author reveals that each law enforcement agency involved in the case is

only concerned with its own agenda. Prejudice is inflicted on Leaphorn by the FBI agents who downplay his detective work. If Leaphorn were to communicate the new evidence to the authorities, there is the possibility that the FBI would have the opportunity to follow up on it and put the murder rightfully to bed. However, Leaphorn withholds evidence because he thinks that the authorities will not care who killed George.

Excerpt 14: *Students Doing the Tasks Stage Episode (9.1)*

((Blue Group is sitting in a circle. Davi raises his gaze from the handout and looks at his group members.))

- 01 Davi *((reads a discussion question to his group))* When you were
 02 reading the description of the Zuni ceremony, could you
 03 imagine what was going on? Did you like it? (1.0) Yeah, [in my
 04 opinion]=
- 05 Nazer =[There was] heaven. At first, they said that, uh, the Zuni tribe
 06 is, there were some three or four thousand people living in the
 07 Zuni, but everybody came and then (.) the ceremony started.
 08 Some, some people were (.) personifying Shalako. And there
 09 was at least two, one or two Shalako=
- 10 Davi =Yeah, that's the maximum.
- 11 Nazer =Yeah, it is the maximum. Everybody was enjoying it because
 12 it's their tradition, they respect it. Maybe for Leaphorn it was
 12 somewhat strange (.) but for others I think they enjoyed their
 13 festival.
- 14 Davi I think it is good to see, to see this Zuni festival. I can imagine.
- 15 Jorge Do you imagine? Imagine?
- 16 Davi Yeah. Okay. *((reads a discussion question to his group))* Do
 17 you think that Leaphorn was responsible for the death of
 18 George Bowlegs? If not, who then?
- 19 Jorge *((repeats the question sentence to himself with a weak
 20 vocalization))* °Leaphorn was responsible for [the death of
 21 George Bowlegs?°]
- 22 Davi [I think the, the blame is,] (1.0) I don't know if there is the
 23 word disintegrate? Disintegration? You know this?
- 24 Nazer What is the meaning of that?
- 25 Davi Integrated, you know? Something connected, everything
 26 connected. They are the opposite of this. Disconnection
 27 between the polices. I think if they worked together, better,

28 better than they did, they could solve this, I think. I think they
 29 could solve this. I think the blame is on (.) all of them, all
 30 together. Not just Leaphorn, because you have a lot of men
 31 working in this case. You have five or six men working and
 32 they could solve the case at the same time. But the system
 33 failed=
 34 Nazer =But (.), but George is also guilty for this one. I think he, uh, he
 35 could write a letter or something referring to the Reynolds'
 36 thing. He, he was cheating. He was salting or something like
 37 that. If he gave some, uh, information about this to Leaphorn
 38 and the police, they would start to search for Reynolds.
 39 Davi Uh, he, he is a boy. He is a boy. He was thinking (.) about
 40 something he believed. It was not true. Yeah, I agree with you.
 41 Nazer But Reynolds used his, uh, logic and caught him.

In Excerpt 14, the first question, “When you were reading the description of the Zuni ceremony, could you imagine what was going on? Did you like it?” (lines 2 and 3), requires students to evaluate the text and situate themselves toward textual knowledge. This excerpt indicates that Nazer provides his answers to the question across turns. He exhibits a range of textual knowledge to support his claims including the cultural differences between the Zuni and the Navajo. Davi and Jorge respond by adding their brief comments to Nazer’s ideas through supporting.

The second question, “Do you think that Leaphorn was responsible for the death of George Bowlegs? If not, who then?,” requires students to infer with a big picture of the story. Davi, in lines 22 through 33, provides extensive comments to articulate his points, and more reasoning is included for his claims. His claims across turns are that perhaps if Leaphorn were to communicate the new evidence to the authorities, they would have the opportunity to follow up on it and put the murder rightfully to bed. However, the last chapters demonstrate to students that Leaphorn withholds evidence because he thinks the authorities will not care who killed George. Davi’s comments indicate his own uncomfortable feelings about the characters’ actions and decisions depicted in the text.

Nazer adds to the points by offering different ideas that “George is also guilty for this one” (line 34) and then elaborates his claims in lines 34 through 38. Davi defends by acknowledging “he is a boy” (line 39) but again responds to Nazer through agreeing with and supporting his claims. Though the book did not clearly reveal whether George learned of Dr. Reynolds’ cheating, this group does not pose this underlying question further.

Excerpt 14 demonstrates that the end stage of the literature discussions is characterized as longer stretches of talk in which the students were able to extend comments and elaborate on their own and others’ previous turns. The analysis shows that extensive response and lengthy explanations by one speaker were more present, but a back-and-forth type of reciprocal negotiation among students was rather uncommon narrow. Further, at around the end stage of the literature discussions, the students were beginning to employ a more specialized lexis, as evidenced by the terms “personifying” (line 8) and “salting” (line 36), which were explicitly emphasized by the teacher during the *review* and *sharing with the class* stages.

Another important characteristic of the end stage of the literature discussions was that meaning making beyond the literal interpretations and personal, emotional connections to the text were more present in the students’ conversations. By situating discussion questions in their own experiences and positioning themselves as experts, the students attempted to connect their personal responses to the text and generate conversations that extended beyond the textual information. Thus, the students’ talk became more authored. In Bakhtin’s (1986) terms, it became more dialogic between students themselves and the text.

Bakhtin’s (1986) distinction between the univocal and dialogic can be useful in understanding the classroom speech genres. Lotman (1988) reconceptualizes this

distinction between monologue and dialogue in terms of functional dualism which, Lotman (1988) maintains, is characteristic of all spoken, written, and non-verbal texts. For Lotman (1988), all texts have both univocal and dialogic functions; their univocal function is to convey meaning as accurately as possible, or “to convey meanings adequately” (Lotman, 1988, p. 34), while their dialogic function is to generate new meanings. All texts serve both functions but, in different contexts and for different purposes, either can predominate.

For example, in the above excerpts of the students’ talk, at a univocal level, the students are communicating basic information about the text. At a dialogic level, the students’ voices take the textual references as “thinking devices” (Thompson, 2008, p. 244), and from this basis new thoughts and meanings are generated. This process can be exemplified in Davi’s emotional responses to the characters’ actions and decisions; for example, in his compassionate feelings about George as he responds by saying “he is a boy, he is a boy (line 39) in Excerpt 14. From the standpoint of functional dualism, the dialogic function clearly predominates as the students generate extended discourse at a variety of inter-related levels, interacting with textual elements, speaking through one other’s voices and completing one other’s statements or comments. The following are also the examples of discussion questions with which the students’ voices interact actively with textual elements that relate to the characters and plot and manage to extend their responses to their emotional feelings and personal experiences:

- (1) Compare the Zuni and Navajo ideas about heaven. Is your concept of heaven like either of theirs? (fifth session of literature discussions, July 20, 2010)
- (2) Have you ever had any hallucination like Leaphorn had? (sixth session of literature discussions, July 27, 2010)

- (3) “Don’t get lost. Moon rises east, and goes down west. Try.” If you had had only these two phrases in the end of your life, to say to somebody, what would you have said? To whom? (sixth session of literature discussions, July 27, 2010)
- (4) If you were born in that time, would you prefer to be a Zuni or a Navajo? (seventh session of literature discussions, August 3, 2010)
- (5) Did you like the way this book ended? Have you imagined that Reynolds were the murderer? (seventh session of literature discussions, August 3, 2010)
- (6) What groups come to Zuni village to attend the annual ritual? What do you think motivates the different groups? Would you go if you could? (seventh session of literature discussions, August 3, 2010)

The analysis of the data shows that the discussion questions that required students to connect to their personal experiences occurred more commonly toward the end stage of the literature discussions. The connections made by the students indicate that they had developed understandings and constructed knowledge about the text. For example, the process of making connections between students’ own concept of heaven to the Zuni and Navajo ideas about heaven requires students to construct knowledge about the text, evaluate meanings, and situate themselves toward that knowledge. In this way, new thoughts and meanings were constructed and extended through reciprocal negotiation of talk.

In summary, the analysis of the end stage of the literature discussions demonstrates that the students were able to conceptualize and evaluate the text to make connections between the experiences of the characters and their own life experiences. This ability led to longer stretches of talk in which the students extended comments and elaborated on their own and others’ previous ideas.

Second Research Question Summary

In this chapter, as an attempt to answer the second research question “What are the nature and characteristics of talk generated by ESL students in literature discussions?,” I focused on the *students doing the tasks* stage within each activity cycle. For my analysis, I selected illustrative, representative excerpts taken from three time points in the class period: from (1) near the beginning, (2) in the middle of the period, and (3) at the end of the course of literature discussions.

The analysis revealed distinctive features of student-to-student exchanges during the *students doing the tasks* stage that generated time and opportunity for more open-ended discussion, extensive comments, or connections or sharing between and among students. The data showed that there were indeed changes and evidence of development across a sequence of activities and tasks of the classroom. At the beginning of the course, the students’ comments mainly addressed the plot and clarified the content of the text, and the resulting talk tended to animate the text’s voice. In the middle of the course, there was a more dialogic inter-animation of voices between the students themselves and the text (Bakhtin, 1986; Lotman, 1990), as they constructed knowledge and inferred new meanings beyond decoding and literal interpretations of the text.

By the end of the course, the students used longer stretches of talk in which they were extending comments and elaborating on their own previous turns. Upon close examination, the extending and elaborating on self or others across turns, as illustrated by the restatements and elaborations of previous utterances, were fairly recognizable as strategies commonly employed by the students in the discussions. These strategies had been appropriated by the students as they attempted to maximize and extend their linguistic and intellectual resources through interaction. Repetition was another

characteristic of the student talk, as with overlapping, latching between utterances, the echoing of one another and the completing of one another's contributions, and these strategies served to build collaborative construction of meaning in the student-to-student exchanges. In the next chapter, I offer an overview of this study.

CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter offers an overview of this study including the purpose of the study, the methodological procedures, and a summary of the study's findings relative to the research questions. I then present theoretical and practical implications of the findings. I conclude this chapter by discussing directions for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, this study was an attempt to illustrate and interpret young adult ESL students' participation and knowledge construction in literature discussions in a high-intermediate level ESL reading classroom in a university-affiliated ELP program. The study focused on the ways in which activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly by the teacher and students. Further, this research attempted to determine the nature and characteristics of talk generated by students in literature discussions.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEDURES

This study was situated within a constructivist paradigm of inquiry. Constructivism maintains that truth and knowledge are co-created by social and individual perspectives and absolute realities are unknowable (Hatch, 2002). Naturalistic methods of data collection were employed in keeping with the constructivist paradigm, including classroom observations, audio and video recordings, transcripts of audio and video recordings, field notes, interviews with the teacher and students, teacher resources,

and student artifacts. This naturalistic inquiry drew from qualitative traditions in terms of design, and the study was further guided by grounded theory and constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data analysis proceeded in two phases. The initial analysis from qualitative traditions provided a holistic perspective on the data that enabled me to capture a big picture of the ways in which the teacher handled different stages of learning; for instance, how the various tasks and activities were introduced and maintained, and whether and how connections between various texts and activities were made across lessons as the class progressed.

In the second stage of the analysis, the data were analyzed by means of discourse analysis (e.g., Hepburn & Potter, 2004; Potter & Wetherell, 1994; Wood & Kroger, 2000). The teaching and learning processes in literature discussions were broken down into episodes for a micro-level analysis. During this second phase, key episodes that represented the typical type of discourse were selected for subsequent transcription. The transcribed excerpts were then used for a detailed discourse analysis of classroom interaction, along with the interpretations that were presented. Finally, I applied several techniques of data collection and analysis that contributed to building trustworthiness. For instance, I wrote analytic memos to record my emerging insights and to help organize initial analysis. Peer debriefing challenged me to consider the scope and depth of the findings in new ways.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

To summarize the findings of this study as reported in Chapters 4 and 5, this section is organized by the following two guiding research questions.

Research Question 1: *What are the ways that activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly in a high-intermediate level ESL reading and discussion classroom? What is the process of task completion in literature discussions?*

The first research question was addressed in Chapter 4, and it concerns the ways in which activities and tasks in literature discussions are structured jointly in Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom.

Inspired by studies that developed observational schemes specifically for a sequencing nature of classroom discourse (e.g., Bernstein, 1999; Christie, 2002; Gibbons, 2006; Lemke, 1990; van Lier, 1996; Wells, 1995), I documented and examined the sequencing of teaching and learning activities in literature discussions. In particular, the schemes developed were applied to the data to analyze lessons and activity structures at both the macro-level and more micro-level of interaction within the context of literature discussions.

As a result of the analysis, I broadly identified six stages in the structure that constituted a cycle of activity. The six stages were (1) *reading at home*, (2) *setting up and review*, (3) *students redefining the tasks*, (4) *students doing the tasks*, (5) *sharing with the class*, and (6) *taking in-class quizzes* stages.

The analysis indicated that these sequenced stages of the activity cycle created distinct opportunities and contexts for ESL students to participate in and contribute to collaborative and collective manners of meaning making. The analysis of the ongoing sequencing of the six stages demonstrated that several interactional types in the sequencing were identified and were marked by teacher monologue, teacher-student dialogic exchanges, and student-student participatory exchanges (van Lier, 1996; Gibbons, 2006). For example, teacher monologue, which characterized stage 2 (*the teacher's setting up*), referred to those points in the discourse in which the teacher held

the floor with only mere interruptions from students. Teacher-to-student interactions, which characterized stages 2 (*the teacher's review*) and 5 (*sharing with the class*), referred to the discourse patterns that aligned with the IRE (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979) sequence through which the teacher maintained control of the discourse. The teacher questioned, the students responded, and then she evaluated their responses. But interaction boundaries were much more relaxed so that more dialogic forms of talk between the teacher and students could occur.

On the other hand, student-to-student interactions characterized stages 3 (*students redefining the tasks*) and 4 (*students doing the tasks*) in which student-initiated participatory exchanges among students occurred. It seems that the activity cycle adopted by the teacher was established at the beginning of the study and did not change over the course of the study. This finding also suggests that this particular activity cycle enabled students to have regular and extended opportunities for talk and interaction. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that these structures, which were largely recurrent and consistent, helped ESL students to engage actively in classroom discussions.

My analysis also showed that the staged, goal-oriented teaching and learning processes in the literature discussions had a close alignment with the particular patterns of interaction and varied roles or positions that changed to construct different scripts of classroom discourse. The patterning of interactions changed considerably from one stage to the next within the activity cycle, and the sequenced structure allowed for a shifting of roles and positions between the teacher and students. The analysis indicated that there was a marked difference in the way the teacher assumed the positions in different stages. For example, since the reciprocal and dialogic forms of talk that the teacher-fronted whole class interactions worked to generate decentered the teacher's position as the evaluator of student responses, the students were able to position themselves as the

knowers (Berry, 1981) in interpretations of the text. When the teacher joined student-to-student interactions, while still in her role as a facilitator of the group progress of talk, she simultaneously adopted the position of a co-participant in the conversation, so that some equality of participation could be achieved. The resultant discourse became interpersonally more symmetrical in terms of who was positioned as the knower in the knowledge construction process.

Research Question 2: *What are the characteristics of student talk that occurred within the context of literature discussions? How do ESL students negotiate and construct meaning with the text?*

The second research question was addressed in Chapter 5, and it involves the quality of student talk in literature discussions with respect to the *students doing the tasks* stage within each activity cycle. For my analysis, I selected the illustrative, representative excerpts taken from three points of time in the class period: from (1) near the beginning, (2) at approximately the middle of the period, and (3) at the end of the course of literature discussions. The analysis revealed distinctive features of student-to-student exchanges that generated time and opportunity for more open-ended discussion, extensive comments, or connections or sharing between students. The data further showed that there was evidence of development or growth in the language across a sequence of activities and tasks. At the beginning of the course, the students' comments mainly addressed the plot and clarified the content of the text, and the resulting talk tended to animate the text's voice. In the middle of the course, there was a more dialogic inter-animation of voices between the students themselves and the text (Bakhtin, 1986; Lotman, 1990) as they inferred new meanings beyond decoding and literal interpretations

of the text. By the end of the course, the students used longer stretches of talk in which they were extending comments and elaborating on their own previous turns.

Upon close examination, the student-to-student talk exchanges during the *doing the tasks* stage featured more discursive and extended talk as the students were encouraged to construct meanings collaboratively and to engage in interactive discourse with one another. As stated in Chapter 4, the discussions took the form of a ‘collective inquiry’ (Lindfors, 1999; Martínez-Roldán, 2005), as the students were willing to acknowledge uncertainty and elicit others’ help for understandings of the text. The extending and elaborating on self or others across turns, as evidenced by the restatements and elaborations of previous utterances, were fairly recognizable as strategies commonly employed by the students in the discussions. These strategies had been appropriated by the students as they attempted to maximize and extend their linguistic and intellectual resources through interaction. Repetition was another characteristic of the student talk, as was overlapping, latching between utterances, the echoing of one another and the completing of one another’s contributions, and these strategies served to build collaborative construction of meaning in the student-to-student exchanges.

These features were rendered as unique in this study but also broadly similar to what has been reported in existing SLA studies (e.g., Ali, 1994; Boyd, 2011; Boyd & Maloof, 2000, Chu, 2008; Kim, 2004) that investigated literary discussions in the ESL classroom contexts. As discussed in Chapter 2, Boyd and Maloof (2000) and Boyd and Rubin (2002, 2006), for example, have focused on the interactional roles and strategies the teacher adopts in facilitating extended discourse in the classroom. These studies claimed that although particular structures predispose students to particular types of talk, language learning is not so much tied to the structure of a classroom activity such as IRE but rather is tied to the participant roles enacted by both the teacher and the students

(Boyd & Maloof, 2000, p. 142). In addition to varied participant roles and positions, however, I argue from the findings of the first research question that the sequencing of the activity cycle enabled students to have regular and extended opportunities for talk and interaction. Further, I contend that these structures, which were largely recurrent and consistent, seemed to help ESL students to engage actively in classroom discussions. What is significant is that the presence of the recurrent activity cycle in the literature discussions seemed to extend the “semiotic budget” of the classroom, to use van Lier’s (1996, 2000) terms, and created a further source of language learning opportunities. According to van Lier, this is a context that is rich in message abundance and that is available to the students, as “off-task talk” has unplanned advantages in providing such opportunities for language learners. The implications of the above-mentioned findings of this study are further discussed in the following sections.

Implications

This study explored young adult ESL students’ participation in discussions of literature through qualitative and discourse analytic approaches. Looking at classroom talk through the lens of sociocultural theories clarified the characteristics of the talk within the context of literature discussions. The findings relate not only to theory but also to teaching practice. Theoretical and practical implications are presented in the following two sections.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Classroom talk within the field of SLA has been studied from a variety of perspectives, including interactionist second language acquisition (e.g., Gass, Mackey, &

Ross-Fieldman, 2005; Kida, 2005; Long & Porter, 1985); sociocultural theory (e.g., Ohta, 1995; Ohta & Nakaone, 2004; Platt & Brooks, 2002); and conversational and discourse analytic studies (e.g., Markee, 2000; Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004; Seedhouse, 2004). The combination of discourse analytic approaches and sociocultural theories of learning (e.g., Alexander, 2006; Mercer, 2004; Mortimer & Scott, 2003; Wells, 1999) is an area of inquiry that is widely used as a way of interpreting interaction in its social context, and this study is therefore situated within a growing body of research in this area. This analytic approach allowed the operationalization of terms such as zone of proximal development, mediation and related concept of scaffolding, and jointly constructed discourse in the discourse practices of participants in the community of the classroom.

First, the teacher's role in this study was characterized in a variety of ways, depending on particular pedagogical purposes in interaction. From a sociocultural perspective, Gibbons (2006) argues that the teacher's main role in student learning is that of mediation and that the fundamental premise of teaching as mediation is "the recognition that both language and learning depend on the nature of the dialogue between teacher and students" (p. 174). One of the realities of the classroom is that there exists an asymmetrical distribution of knowledge and power (Edwards & Mercer, 1987). Teaching as mediation, and the closely related concept of scaffolding, acknowledges and builds on this asymmetry since this constructs both teacher and students as active participants in the teaching and learning process.

The analysis of the sequencing of activities demonstrated that the degree to which the teacher retained the primary control of the discourse was not static but varied according to the pedagogical purpose of particular tasks. As examined in Chapter 4, the sequenced stages of the activities in literature discussions appeared to produce fairly

distinct interaction patterns in the classroom. For example, the *review* and *sharing with the class* stages tended to produce dialogic patterns between teacher and students as the teacher attempted to share and construct knowledge, but more teacher-controlled patterns were used to remind students of what was newly introduced in the text or what had been learned. When students were in earlier stages of learning, the teacher's talk incorporated stronger scaffolding in the learning process. When students were in the *students doing the tasks* stage, which created a context for student-to-student exchanges, the teacher as an evaluator was decentered, and jointly constructed knowledge was foregrounded in the discourse. These interactional features between teacher and students or among students suggest that in a view of teaching and learning as mediation, a learner's individual successes or failures depend critically on the quality of the contributions of others (Gibbons, 2006).

Second, the findings of this dissertation study offer important implications for the nature of the talk in the classroom. This study was premised by the assumption that extended turns of student talk are the expected outcomes of quality instruction. Research in classroom discourse argues that extended time "on the floor" in student-centered exchanges, exploratory talk, and elaborated utterances promotes communicative competence, individual reasoning, shared understanding and knowledge, substantive engagement, and high-level comprehension (Applebee et al., 2003; Hymes, 1971; Mercer et al., 1999; Murphy et al., 2009; Murphy, Wilkinson, & Soter, 2011; Nystrand, 1997, 2006; Resnick, 2010; Soter et al., 2008). According to Boyd (2011), extended and elaborated student talk in language classrooms is the key to inquiry, to collaborative learning, and to the assimilation of knowledge in personally meaningful ways.

The student talk in this study exemplified what Chang and Wells (1988) have called literate talk — talk that is mediated by access to written texts and is effectively

elaborated and extended for public use. In Ms. Brown's ESL reading classroom, discussions of literature provided opportunities for students to engage with the content of the text, to develop critical thinking, and to actively participate in the knowledge construction process. While the notion of "comprehensible output" (Swain, 1995, 2000) traditionally refers to the language produced by an individual, the nature of the talk in this study suggests that this notion is what the group or the class as a whole is striving for. In other words, students' discussions of literature provide a context for discourse to be jointly constructed so that individual students collectively become experts as a group.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

On a practical level, the findings of this study suggested that there were not simply the opportunities for students to participate in meaningful, extended stretches of talk but also the factors that made this kind of talk more likely to occur. The factors I identified in the literature discussions of Ms. Brown's ESL class were that (1) students shared control of the topic; (2) students responded aesthetically to the text; (3) students had interpretive authority; and (4) students completed the discussion tasks through collaborative and collective manners of reciprocal interaction and negotiation. First, what students wanted to talk about was not predetermined by the teacher but was entirely decided by the students themselves. Second, students were encouraged to present responses that included making connections with their own personal experiences and cultural perspectives. Third, students were not restricted to one correct interpretation of the text but were given freedom to take and hold the floor in participation. This approach to literary analysis enabled students to position themselves as the knowers in the

knowledge construction process. Fourth, students were willing to acknowledge uncertainty and elicit others' help for understandings of the text.

From the perspective of language learning, these factors offered a number of contexts and affordances (van Lier, 2000) for second language development. Research suggests that second language development can occur in tandem in that both the critical reading of texts and talk about and around texts constitute learning opportunities (Wallace, 2003). As Donato and Brooks (2004) said, language learning and literature study are mutually constituting and supporting experiences (p. 184). Although the focus is not on formal language development, opportunities to engage in discussion about and around texts allow students to draw more fully on their existing linguistic resources and to stretch them at the same time.

A further implication for teachers relates to the explicit instruction about what discussions are and how to engage in them. In this study, while enacting the pre-reading phase, the teacher explicitly defined the goals for discussion with students and demonstrated the process of engaging in a discussion. The teacher also provided guided practice in which the teacher's scaffolding gradually diminished and students were expected to take increasing responsibility for the aspects of the tasks until the students were able to do them independently (Pearson & Dole, 1988; Maloch, 2004). More importantly, the findings indicated that the development of a more dialogic classroom does not come about through a checklist of teaching procedures to follow, but is the result of the epistemological orientation of the teacher. Where knowledge is viewed as co-constructed between the teacher and students or among students but not as a commodity to be transmitted to students, there is potential for more symmetrical and collaborative classroom interactions to occur.

Finally, there are implications for the structuring and sequencing of learning activities within the context of literature discussions. The analysis of sequencing of activities in this study indicates that the patterning of interactions changed considerably from one stage to the next within each activity cycle and that these different patterns led to the construction of different types of talk. This finding suggests that changing the roles and positions of the teacher from an evaluator to a facilitator and to a co-participant also affected students' participation in discussions. The findings also confirmed that the teacher's instructional practices can evolve and transform according to the students' degree and area of interest, background knowledge and cultural experiences, language proficiency, and the dynamics of the group. Ms. Brown taught her ESL students in this manner. It is thus hoped that teachers should be aware of and responsive to this potential.

Ultimately, this study wishes to open up possibilities for ways in which teachers can design text-based classroom discussions and engage classroom discourse that would enable ESL students' greater participation in the construction of knowledge in the classroom, and through this, increase their communicative competence in the target language.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study provide important directions for future research in this field. First, this study described and analyzed young adult ESL students' participation in discussions of literature and the nature of student talk that this context generated. It is hoped that future studies will adapt some of the methods used in this research to examine a variety of other classroom discourse events in the classroom to determine the characteristics of classroom discourse, attributes such as connectivity and coherence, and

the kind of talk described as ‘literate talk’ that is valued for constructing extended classroom discourse.

Second, there were many factors that influenced the dynamics of the classroom participation that could not be considered in the present research. For example, different proficiency levels of individual students might have made a difference in the interaction that supported learning. As stated in Chapter 3, this high-intermediate level young adult ESL reading class was truly multilevel in its language proficiency. This issue became apparent to me as I was observing and analyzing the data, as some students seemed to have longer and more complex responses to the text while participating in interaction than others. On several occasions, interviews with less verbal students, such as Jorge in Blue Group, indicated that although they were not participating directly or verbally, they were cognitively active and were engaging with the content of the discussions. Observations confirmed that they were using a range of paralinguistic strategies as ways of responding and showing their interest to others.

Other questions that warrant further consideration are gendered behavior and response, off-talk behavior, and power relationships within groups that might have impacted the level of participation and the sense of community in this study. For example, observations showed that individual student’s comments and participation often seemed inconsistent with the way she or he had acted in the teacher-students whole class interactions. Some students, such as Ahmad in Green Group, were verbally active in teacher-led whole class interactions but less active in student-led small group interactions. Cultural aspects of literature discussions were another factor that seemed to actively impede the interaction of ESL students from diverse cultural backgrounds, an issue that was not adequately addressed in this dissertation study.

Teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes about literature in language classrooms represent another possible topic of study for teachers and researchers who would benefit from additional knowledge of participatory exchanges of talk about texts. A more comprehensive analysis of these factors could have been conducted to have a better understanding of how they contributed to the participation of students in the classroom discourse.

On the other hand, the length of the study may have been a limitation. As a qualitative study that used ethnographic methods, nine weeks of observations in a study context is not a long period of time. Thus, more longitudinal studies and more data from the students may be required to obtain additional evidence of changes and development across a sequence of activities or changes in language use from one classroom event to another in the classroom, thereby exhibiting a form of what Halliday and Martin (1993) calls 'logogenesis,' or growth in the language used in the unfolding text of the classroom.

Also, this study was a naturalistic, qualitative inquiry of one teacher and her twelve ESL students in a university-affiliated ESL reading classroom. As a result the findings may not be generalizable to other populations of learners. However, the findings are still insightful in terms of examining sociocultural perspectives of teaching and learning that could be considered for further research into instructional practices in language classrooms and also with other populations of students.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

IRB APPROVED ON: 07/26/2010
IRB Protocol #2009-08-0067

DO NOT USE AFTER: 09/27/2010

Consent Form

Title: A discursive account of teacher-led and peer-led contexts in an adult ESL classroom

Conducted By: Chun Hwa Kang

Of The University of Texas at Austin: Foreign Language Education

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research (Chun Hwa Kang) will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not you wish to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact your current or future relationships with the University of Texas at Austin. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participating. The researcher is conducting this study for her dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to explore adult ESL learners' experiences of literature discussion groups and diverse classroom activities in a reading and discussion class.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following: 1) Allow the researcher to observe you participating in class activities. The classroom discussions will be video and audio taped. 2) Participate in an audio recorded interview about your experiences of learning literary texts. 3) Complete a brief background questionnaire.

Total estimated time to participate: A majority of the research activities involve no additional time beyond your regular classroom activities. The interviews will take place outside of classroom time and will last approximately 15 minutes. The background questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Risks of being in the study: It is not expected to cause any mental or physical harm for the participants except some loss of confidentiality. To prevent this, any kind of information which might harm you such as your name and the name of the university will not be disclosed.

Benefits of being in the study: One possible benefit is increased awareness and reflection on your learning as a result of participation in this study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections: All the records of this study will be stored privately and securely. The researcher will not use your real names but will assign pseudonyms for this study. The interviews and diverse classroom activities will be audio or videotaped, and the audio and videotapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them.

The tapes will be placed in a secure cabinet and locked. The tapes will be heard only for research purposes by me and my advisors. The tapes will be erased after they are transcribed or coded. You will be fully informed of the details concerning the procedures of the study and your privacy and confidentiality. The data of the results will not be shared with your teacher but will be used only for research purposes by me and my supervisor. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, have the legal right to review the research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, I will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions: If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researcher conducting the study, contact the researcher, Chun Hwa Kang or Dr. Beth Maloch, Ph.D., who is supervising her Ph.D. dissertation, at _____ at The University of Texas at Austin, USA. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at _____ or the Office of Research Support at _____ or email: orso@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix B: Parental Permission Form

IRB APPROVED ON: 07/26/2010
IRB Protocol #2009-08-0067

DO NOT USE AFTER: 09/27/2010

Parental Permission Form

Title: A discursive account of teacher-led and peer-led contexts in an adult ESL classroom

Conducted By: Chun Hwa Kang

Of The University of Texas at Austin: Foreign Language Education

You are being asked to allow the researcher to do her research with your son. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research (Chun Hwa Kang) will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not you wish to give permission. The student's participation is entirely voluntary. The researcher is conducting this study for her dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to explore ESL learners' experiences of literature discussion groups and diverse classroom activities in a reading and discussion class.

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I will ask him to do the following: 1) Allow the researcher to observe him participating in class activities. The classroom discussions will be video and audio taped. 2) Participate in an audio recorded interview about his experiences of learning literary texts. 3) Complete a brief background questionnaire.

Total estimated time to participate: A majority of the research activities involve no additional time beyond your child's regular classroom activities. The interviews will take place outside of classroom time and will last approximately 15 minutes. The background questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Risks of being in the study: It is not expected to cause any mental or physical harm for the participants except some loss of confidentiality. To prevent this, any kind of information which might harm them such as their names and the name of the university will not be disclosed.

Benefits of being in the study: One possible benefit is increased awareness and reflection on learning as a result of participation in this study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections: All the records of this study will be stored privately and securely. The researcher will not use their real names but will assign pseudonyms for this study. The interviews or literature discussion sessions will be audio or videotaped, and the audio and videotapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The tapes will be placed in a secure cabinet and locked. The tapes will be heard only for research purposes by me and my advisors. The tapes will be erased after they are transcribed or coded. You will be fully informed of the details concerning the procedures of the study and the privacy and confidentiality. The data of the results will be used only for research purposes by the researcher and her supervisor. Your signature indicates that you have read the information

IRB APPROVED ON: 07/26/2010
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DO NOT USE AFTER: 09/27/2010

Statement of Consent:

The voluntary consent of your child was obtained to participate in this study. Your permission should have initially been obtained, as well. You are making a decision about allowing your child to continue to participate in the research and allow the researcher to use the data that was already collected prior to your providing permission. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above and have decided to allow him to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your son to participate in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue participation at any time.

Name of Child participant

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

ASSENT OF MINOR

Statement of Assent:

I have read the description of the study titled "A Discursive Account of Teacher-led and Peer-led Contexts in an Adult ESL Classroom" that is printed above, and I understand what the procedures are and what will happen to me in the study. I have received permission from my parent(s) to participate in the study, and I agree to participate in it. I know that I can quit the study at any time.

Signature of Child

Date

IRB APPROVED ON: 07/26/2010
IRB Protocol #2009-08-0067

DO NOT USE AFTER: 09/27/2010

provided above. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, have the legal right to review the research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify the teacher and the students as subjects. Throughout the study, the researcher will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions: If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your decision call the researcher conducting the study, contact Chun Hwa Kang or
or Dr. Beth Maloch, Ph.D., who is supervising her Ph.D. dissertation, at
at The University of Texas at Austin, USA. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at or the Office of Research Support at
or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix C: Background Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions.

1. Name: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
4. Nationality: _____
5. Your mother tongue (first language): _____
6. Major: _____
7. When do you start learning English? _____
8. How long have you been studying English? _____ years
9. How long have you lived here in the United States? _____ years _____ months
10. What is your TOEFL score? _____
11. Why are you learning English? (circle all that apply)
 - () I must know English to apply for admission to universities including UT.
 - () I am taking English to pass a language requirement.
 - () I learn English because I want to live in this country.
 - () I learn English because English is useful in getting a good job.
 - () I want to make friends with native English speakers.
 - () I want to know more about American culture.
 - () I need to use English in my work.
 - () I am interested in learning languages.
 - () Other reasons (please list): _____
12. If yes, please write down your contact information (phone or email).

Appendix D: Interview Questions (Students)

Backgrounds:

Why did you choose to enroll for the ESL program?

What are your goals of language learning?

How would you rate your English proficiency in general and reading in particular?

What are your previous reading experiences?

What does it mean to be a good reader for you?

Goals and expectations:

What do you expect in this reading class?

How different is this class from other reading classes?

How does this class help prepare for you to develop your reading abilities?

What are your thoughts about the use of literature in this ESL classroom?

What are major contributions of literature to your language learning?

Participation:

How do you prepare for literature discussions?

How do you describe yourself as a participant in the literature discussions?

If any, what are your reasons to participate or not to participate?

Could you explain what you meant when you said or did?

I noticed that this happened during that activity, and I was wondering why you said or did that?

Teacher and student roles:

What are the roles of the students in the classroom?

How do you feel about your teacher's role during discussions?

Do you think the teacher should be the only figure that represents authority in the classroom?

How can the teacher share the authority in interpretations with the students?

Interview Questions (Teacher)

Backgrounds:

What are your academic and educational backgrounds?

What are your beliefs about language learning and teaching?

Tell me your teaching experience in conducting literature discussions in the ESL program?

Pedagogical Goals:

What are the main goals of your class?

How do the reading activities or assignments help achieve these goals?

What are your thoughts about the use of literature in the ESL classroom?

What do you believe about the role of talk in the classroom?

Classroom activities:

What are your goals behind doing the particular activities or events?

Could you explain what you meant when you said or did during that activity or event?

I noticed that this happened during that activity, and I was wondering why you said or did that?

Participation:

How is the student participation in the classroom?

How is this group of students different? (How contributive?)

What might affect the presence or absence of student contribution during that activity or event?

How do you describe yourself as a participant in the literature discussions?

Teacher and student roles:

How do you describe yourself as a teacher in the classroom?

What are the roles of the students in the classroom?

Do you think the teacher should be the only figure that represents authority in the classroom?

How can the teacher share the authority in interpretations with the students?

Appendix E: Student-Generated Discussion Questions

Conferencing Topic: *Dance Hall of the Dead* Questions for Chapters 12-14

FROM: Nia

1. Why Leaphorn did not expected that Isaac's reaction?
2. Why do Isaac and Leaphorn have to protect Susie?
3. What is the role of the father Ingles in this story?

FROM: Mariam

1. How do children become kachinas?
2. Make a comparison between how Salamobia punishes someone for any anger in a ceremonialism and how Ernesto was killed. What is similar?
3. How does Leaphorn want to meet with George? Where and when?

FROM: Erzhan

1. What did Leaphorn expect Isaacs' reaction would be?
2. Why is Isaacs more concerned about Reynolds' dig other than about his fiancée?
3. Why wasn't Father Ingles asked about the vanish of George before this chapter? Do you think that Leaphorn did it on purpose, or you think that he missed this link of a whole chain?

FROM: Davi

1. Reynolds is trying to prove that the Men of Folsom didn't disappear, they survived. Do you think that some indigenous tribe like Navajo or Zuñi could be the result of this evolution process?
2. Is there any legend or ritual like the Zuñi dance hall of the dead in your culture?
3. Father Ingles couldn't find anything similar in Navajo culture or in white men culture to explain to Leaphorn what the Council of Gods exactly are. Do you know any myth or entity like these Gods in your culture?

FROM: Nazer

1. What was Isaac's reaction when Lieutenant Leaphorn came to a digging place with Susanne?
2. What information did Father Ingles know about George mother?
3. How Ernesto was killed?

FROM: Auken

1. Why did Leaphorn and Isaacs worry about Susanne?
2. What does mean the word “Kothluwalawa”?
3. What was Leaphorn’s plan in order to find Bowlegs’ tracks?

FROM: Ms. Brown

Chapter 12:

1. “...the mountain loomed, its broken cliffs sharply outlined in the res and pinks of reflected sunlight and the blacks of shadows. It was one of those moments of startling beauty which as a matter of habit Joe Leaphorn took time to examine and savor.”
2. When was the last time you stopped to enjoy natural beauty? What did you look at?
3. Discuss how Isaac makes the decision to protect Suzanne. What is your opinion: do you think he loves her?

Chapter 13:

1. Compare the Zuni and Navajo ideas about heaven. Is your concept of heaven like either of theirs?
2. Why do the Zunis forbid anger during their ritual ceremonies?

Chapter 14:

1. Suzanne thinks that it would be hard to be a Navajo if being lonely bothers you. Her statement surprises Leaphorn. Why? Then he agrees, adding that you would be “Like a mole that hates the dark.” What does this simile mean?
2. We see many lonely people in this book. Talk about this for a moment: Who is lonely and why?
3. In the last paragraph of this chapter, Leaphorn bitterly sees “a world full of losers.” What’s a loser? Why isn’t Suzanne a loser?

Appendix F: Transcription Conventions

Symbol	Meaning
...	Horizontal ellipses indicate talk omitted from the data segment.
?	Yes/no question rising intonation
.	Sentence-final falling intonation
,	Phrase-final intonation (more to come)
[]	Square brackets between lines or bracketing two lines of talk indicate the onset ([]) and end (]) of overlapping talk.
(0.5)	Numbers in parentheses represent silence measured to the nearest tenth of a second.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a micropause within a turn.
=	Equal signs indicate latching (no interval or pause) between utterances.
<u>Wait</u> a minute	Underlining indicates vocal stress or emphasis.
WOrd	Capital letters indicate talk that is noticeably louder than surrounding talk.
°okay°	The degree sign indicates that the talk following it was markedly quiet or soft.
Oh: no:::	Colons indicate an elongated syllable; the more colons, the more the syllable or sound is stretched.
Wait a mi-	A hyphen shows a sudden cutoff of speech.
This is a (rehash)	Parentheses around words indicate transcriber doubt about what those words are, as in the case of softly spoken or overlapped talk.
This is a ()	Empty parentheses indicate that some talk was not audible or interpretable at all.
((comments))	Double parentheses mark transcriber's descriptions of events.
heh or hah	laughter

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