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# The Intelligibility of Three Nonnative English-Speaking Teaching Assistants: An Analysis of Student-Reported Communication Breakdowns[1]

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*The intelligibility of nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants (NNSTAs) is an issue that concerns researchers, administrators, teacher-trainers, and undergraduates. Based primarily on the work by Smith & Nelson (1985), this paper offers a novel method of looking at intelligibility--first recording undergraduates' immediate feedback on communication breakdowns while watching three NNSTA presentations, then following with an analysis of those communication breakdowns by a group of ESL specialists. The analysis in this study yielded a taxonomy of factors affecting the intelligibility of the NNSTAs. This study also found pronunciation to be the main cause of unintellgibility in the three NNSTA presentations, whether in isolation or in combination with vocabulary misuse, nonnative speech flow, or poor clarity of speech, a finding which confirms students' perceptions of the language problems of NNSTAs reported by Hinofotis & Bailey (1981) and by Rubin & Smith (1989).*

## INTRODUCTION

Nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants (NNSTAs) have become an important focus of attention for ESL teachers in the last ten years as protests by both undergraduate students and the general academic community against the poor language proficiency of some NNSTAs have prompted responses from institutions and individual researchers alike. An increasing number of universities (e.g., Columbia University, Purdue University, and the University of California campuses in Berkeley, Los Angeles, and San Diego) have taken measures to improve the quality of TA selection by requiring prospective NNSTAs to take an oral proficiency test. The tests used range in format from an informal interview to standard tests of spoken English, such as the Test of Spoken English (TSE) or the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK). Many

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institutions also provide pre-service orientation programs for new NNSTAs, which offer intercultural and pedagogical training as a complement to language instruction. Such programs vary in length from a one-day workshop at the University of California in Los Angeles, to a four- or five-day program at Michigan State University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and even three-week or longer courses at the Universities of Wyoming and Minnesota. In addition, most of these universities offer in-service training programs concurrently with the NNSTA's teaching assignment, which include oral skills courses, seminars with an emphasis on pedagogy and cultural issues, classroom observations and feedback, and individual consultation (Constantinides, 1989).

Researchers, on the other hand, have been trying to improve their understanding of the situation by investigating the NNSTA problem from various perspectives. Bailey (1984a), who studied the communicative competence of NNSTAs in relation to that of native speaking TAs, was able to develop a TA typology based on the factors which characterize successful teaching in the classroom. A study by Rounds (1987) looked at NNSTA discourse in the classroom to define discipline-specific discourse which is communicatively competent. Some researchers have also addressed the NNSTA issue from the students' perspective. Hinofotis & Bailey (1981) researched the reactions of American undergraduates to the communicative skills of prospective NNSTAs in order to identify which areas of NNSTA discourse were perceived as problematic by the students. More recently, Brown (1988) studied the attitudes of undergraduate students toward one NNSTA and found significant differences depending on what ethnicity, professional status, or language background the NNSTA had been assigned. Similarly, Rubin & Smith (1989) found that accent, ethnicity, and lecture topic have a significant effect on undergraduates' perceptions of NNSTAs.

Analyzing NNSTA discourse, assessing NNSTAs' oral proficiency in English, and measuring students' attitudes towards NNSTAs are certainly valid and necessary approaches to understanding the NNSTA problem. However, there is also a need to determine the extent of the problem in actual communication terms; i.e., investigators need to know where communiation breaks down and how much comprehension is actually taking place in NNSTA-student interaction. In this respect, Bailey (1984b), Smith & Nelson (1985), and Brown (1988) have recognized the importance of intelligibility in the communication process and have stressed the

need for further studies on intelligibility in NNSTA-student interaction.

Smith & Nelson (1985) define intelligibility and distinguish it from comprehensibility and interpretability in a way that is fitting to the present study:

> a) *Intelligibiliy*: word/utterance recognition; a word/utterance is considered to be unintelligible when the listener is unable to make it out and, thus, to repeat it.
> b) *Comprehensibility*: word/utterance meaning (locutionary force); word/utterance is said to be incomprehensible when the listener can repeat it (i.e., recognizes it) but is unable to understand its meaning in the context in which it appears.
> c) *Interpretability*: meaning behind word/utterance (illocutionary force); a word/utterance is said to be uninterpretable when the listener recognizes it, but is unable to understand the speaker's intentions behind it (i.e., what the speaker is trying to say).
> (Smith & Nelson, 1985, pp. 334-336).

Since, for Smith & Nelson, intelligibility results from the interaction between speaker and listener, unless the listener's perspective is taken into account in the study of NNSTA intelligibility, the researcher will not be able to fully understand how the intelligibility process works in NNSTA-student interactions. The current study was thus undertaken to provide a better understanding of the intelligibility of NNSTAs who have language problems.

## Research Questions

Five research questions were asked in relation to NNSTA intelligibility:

1) How often does communication break down in the NNSTA presentations under study?
2) What proportion of the communication breakdowns is due to a lack of intelligibility, as compared to a lack of either comprehensibility or interpretability (see definitions above)?.

3) What factors seem most frequently to cause a lack of intelligibility in the communication breakdowns reported by the students?
4) How does the intelligibility level of the NNSTAs--as reported by the students--relate to the NNSTAs' oral proficiency in English?
5) How suitable is the methodology devised for the study of NNSTA intelligibility?

## METHOD

### Subjects

Three nonnative English-speaking graduate students were selected on a voluntary basis: Subject 1 (K), from Korea; Subject 2 (I), from Italy; and Subject 3 (H), from India. The subjects were in the fields of economics, mathematics, and computer science, respectively (I shall use the initials of the subjects' native language--Korean, Italian, and Hindi--to protect their indentities and facilitate the reader's recognition). K and H were already TAs at the time the data were collected, whereas I, the only female subject, was a research assistant and a prospective TA, though she had had prior teaching experience both in her native country and in the U.S. That the three NNSTA subjects speak different native languages and specialize in different disciplines is regarded as an advantage rather than a problem for this exploratory study whose findings are meant to serve as pointers to future research rather than be conclusive.

### Procedures and Instruments

The three NNSTAs took the UCLA Oral Proficiency Test (OPT), a twenty-minute discipline-specific test designed in 1988 at UCLA by the TA Training Department of the Office of Instructional Development to assess the oral skills of prospective NNSTAs. The OPT is conducted in an interview format which has the examinee perform a variety of tasks, such as reading aloud, conveying a set of written instructions and giving a prepared presentation to an undergraduate who may ask questions, and conversing informally with the test administrator. Each testing session is videotaped for rating purposes. Two trained raters (ESL specialists) rate each test in seven categories using a performance scale with scores ranging from

zero to four (see Appendix A). The results are averaged for each category and rater, and a report is sent to the examinee's department with an oral proficiency diagnosis and recommendations for further coursework when appropriate. The present study focuses only on Section 4 of the OPT, the prepared presentation.

For the first part of the study, 31 native English-speaking undergraduate students (eight freshmen, five sophomores, nine juniors, and nine seniors) volunteered to watch each of the three videotaped NNSTA presentations (Section 4 of the OPT) in the investigator's presence, one student at a time. Each student was instructed to stop the videotape every time communication broke down, i.e., whenever he/she failed to understand the speaker. The students were also asked to identify the word or utterance they had not understood and which they thought had caused the communication breakdown. These sessions with the students were taperecorded for future reference.

For the second part of the study, six ESL specialists, all of them holders of M.A. degrees and experienced teachers of oral proficiency, were selected to watch the three videotaped presentations as a group in the presence of the investigator. Having previously identified and marked on the presentation transcripts[2] every instance of commmunication breakdown reported by the students, the investigator showed each presentation to the specialists, stopping the tape after each one of the reported communication breakdowns. The specialists' task was to categorize and describe each breakdown using two sets of linguistic categories which I have called 'General Types of Communication Breakdown' (Set 1) and 'Specific Causal Factors' (Set 2) as follows:

Set 1: General Types of Communication Breakdown (see definitions above)[3]
- a) Intelligibility
- b) Comprehensibility
- c) Interpretability

Set 2: Specific Causal Factors[4]
- a) Pronunciation: sounds, stress and intonation
- b) Grammar
- c) Flow of speech- hesitation, pausing
- d) Volume: loudness
- e) Vocabulary: lexicon
- f) Organization: cohesion, discourse structure

g) Clarity of speech: overall easiness to follow talk
h) Other

A norming session in which the two sets of categories were explained and tried out by the raters preceded the rating session.

The first set of categories was used to isolate communication breakdowns caused by lack of intelligibility from those caused by either of the two other categories, while the second set was meant to characterize communication breakdowns in linguistic terms. The six ESL specialists were instructed to select at least one category from each set to describe every communication breakdown reported by the students, bearing in mind that some of the categories partially overlapped and that they could occur simultaneously. The specialists were also allowed to comment on the adequacy of the categories selected and to add new ones whenever appropriate. In addition, the ESL specialists were asked to rate each presenter's oral proficiency in English on a scale ranging from one (poor) to nine (excellent) and to state whether or not they considered the presenter's English good enough to be a TA.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section first reports some general findings about the NNSTA presentations, then reports and discusses the results of the study for each of the five research questions posed (see above).

TABLE 1
Descriptive Information about NNSTA Presentations

| TAs | Field | Presentation Length (mins., secs.) | Total No. of Words | No. of Words per Minute |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| K (L1=Korean) | Economics | 5' 20" | 490 | 91.91 |
| I (L1=Italian) | Mathematics | 4' 00" | 362 | 90.50 |
| H (L1=Hindi) | Computer Science | 4' 20" | 713 | 164.66 |

As Table 1 illustrates, the three presentations varied in length and in total number of words[5], as is to be expected of data collected from subjects simulating an authentic task: The speakers' rate of delivery also varied, H's word-rate per minute being almost double that of K's and I's. Because occasional questions were asked by the student-listeners during the presentations, the word-per-minute ratio is actually lower than it would be if listener's talk-time were factored out. However, listener talk-time was very similar for each of the three presentations.

The students' total and average number of stops per NNSTA presentation and the distribution of stops per number of words are shown in Table 2:

TABLE 2
Students' Stops of Videotape
N=31

| TAs | 1 word stops | 2 word stops | 3 word stops | 4+ word stops | Total No. of stops | Average No. of stops | STD DEV | Avg. No. stops per 100 words |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 25 | 5 | 9 | 49 | 88 | 2.8 | 2.3 | .57 |
| %* | 28.4 | 5.6 | 10.2 | 55.6 | 100 | | | |
| I | 56 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 62 | 2.0 | 1.3 | .55 |
| % | 90.3 | 0 | 0 | 9.6 | 100 | | | |
| H | 27 | 25 | 7 | 13 | 72 | 2.3 | 1.8 | .32 |
| % | 37.5 | 34.7 | 9.7 | 18.0 | 100 | | | |
| TOT. | 108 | 30 | 16 | 68 | 222 | | | |
| % | 48.6 | 13.5 | 7.2 | 30.6 | 100 | | | |

*percentages rounded to one decimal place

For example, during K's presentation, the students stopped the videotape because of a breakdown in communication a total of 88 times; They also reported that in 49 of those instances--the highest percentage of the three presenters for that category (55.6%)--the breakdowns had been caused by a sequence of four of more words. During I's presentation, on the other hand, there were a total of 62 stops, of which 56 were caused by single words--the highest percentage of the three presenters for that category (90.3%).

Table 3 reports the number of cases of communication breakdown and the frequency of students who stopped the videotape for each case (also referred to as 'stops'):

TABLE 3
Cases of Communication Breakdown
N=31

| | Frequency of Stops (No. of Cases) | | | | | | | Average No. of cases per 100 words |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TA | 1 | 2 | 3-8 | 9-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | Total | |
| K | 32 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 46 | 9.1 |
| I | 6 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 3.3 |
| H | 12 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 3.6 |
| TOT | 50 | 15 | 14 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 84 | |

The following is an example of how to read this table: During K's presentation, there were 32 different cases in which only one student stopped the videotape because of a lack of understanding; during I's presentation, in contrast, there was one case (the word "catheti") which caused between 20 and 24 students to stop the videotape. As can be seen in the table, K and H exhibit a similar distribution of communication breakdowns, loading on the lower end of the scale (32 and 12 one-stop cases respectively). I, on the contrary, is the only presenter with any cases (two) for which 15 or more students stopped the videotape.

**Question 1**: *How often does communication break down in the NNSTA presentations under study?*

Taken together, the results presented in Tables 2 and 3 provide sufficient information to fully describe the distribution and frequency of communication breakdowns in the three NNSTA presentations under study. Table 2 shows that students indicated a breakdown in communication (i.e., they stopped the videotape) an average of 2 to 2.8 times per presentation. However, while some students did not stop the videotape at all, others stopped it well above the group average, the actual range of stops per student for all three presenters being 0-17. The high values of the standard deviations are indicative of such variation, though they suggest that there is a floor effect in the data, i.e., that it accumulates at the lower end of the

range, producing a positively skewed distribution. This floor effect appears to indicate that students had different levels of tolerance for foreign accents, some having had an easier time understanding the presenters than others (a number of students pointed this out after watching the presentations). In addition, it can be assumed that some students could handle ambiguity better than others by making use of their background knowledge, whether of context or of visual clues. Attitude and students' perceptions of the presenters are other possible causes of miscommunication, but the influence of affect falls outside the scope of this study. Comparing the three presenters by estimating the average number of stops per one hundred words (Table 2, last column), it can be seen that H caused fewer communication breakdowns (.32) than either K (.57) or I (.55).

Nevertheless, the display of the total number of cases of communication breakdowns per presenter (K=46; I=12; H=26) in Table 3 seems to suggest that the students found I the easiest to understand, K the most difficult, and H somewhere in between. A fairer measure for comparison, however, the number of cases of communication breakdown per one hundred words (Table 3, last column) shows a different pattern: I and H have a similar number of cases while K has almost three times as many, indicating that the students may have found K more difficult to understand than either I or H who were equally comprehensible. I shall discuss this point further under Question 4 below.

**Question 2**: *What proportion of the communication breakdowns is due to a lack of intelligibility, as compared to a lack of either comprehensibility or interpretability?*

As can be seen in Table 4, the six ESL specialists thought lack of intelligibility to be the main cause (80.9%) of communication breakdown in the 84 total cases reported by the students (see Table 3) of which all but 3 cases were described by the raters as caused in part or wholly by a lack of intelligibility. Lack of comprehensibility and lack of interpretability accounted for only 15.3% and 3.7% of the cases respectively. The distribution of percentages across presenters follows a similar pattern:

TABLE 4
ESL Specialists' Descriptions of Communication Breakdowns Using the Categories in Set 1
N=6

| TAs | Intelligibility % | Comprehensibility % | Interpretability % | TOTAL* % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 77.9 | 18.2 | 3.8 | 100 |
| I | 82.6 | 13.3 | 4.0 | 100 |
| H | 85.5 | 11.0 | 3.4 | 100 |
| All TAs | 80.9 | 15.3 | 3.7 | 100 |

*percentages rounded to one decimal place

In addition, for 13 of the 84 cases, there was overlapping of two classificatory categories, while, in two cases, all three categories were selected as possible causes of the communication breakdown. It should be pointed out that when a word or an utterance is partly or totally unintelligible, it may also be somewhat incomprehensible and uninterpretable, and thus some intelligibility problems may have overshadowed potential comprehensibility or interpretability problems.

To be included in the analysis, a category had to be agreed upon by at least two of the six specialists. A higher level of agreement was not required since, given the exploratory nature of this study, it was important to capture as much of the information provided by the specialists as possible. This procedure is in agreement with Krippendorff's (1980) who not only feels that it is a deceptive practice "to admit only those data to an investigation on which independent coders achieve perfect agreement" but also that "in a scientific inquiry, data must be chosen to be representative of a phenomenon of intent and not to suit the ends of a particular method" (p. 132).

A measure of interrater reliability is not provided because the binary nature of the data in the study--the specialists either selected or did not select a category of those supplied--does not lend itself to easy statistical analysis. Alternatively, I shall provide an indication of the percentage of agreement among the ESL specialists. Using the three categories in Set 1, all six specialists agreed in 30% of the cases analyzed, five or more agreed in 60% of the cases, and four or more agreed in 80% of the cases. For the categories in Set 2 (see below), the six specialists agreed in 60% of the cases, five or more agreed in 90% of the cases, and four or more agreed in 95% of the cases. The

lower agreement found for the categories in Set 1 reflects the difficulty in distinguishing between intelligibility and comprehensibility, a problem Smith & Nelson (1985) also report in their study.

**Question 3**: *What factors seem most frequently to cause a lack of intelligibility in the communication breakdowns reported by the students?*

In order to answer this question, only those cases reported by the raters as caused by lack of intelligibility were looked at in relation to the second set of categories proposed. As can be seen in Table 5, pronunciation is the factor present for more than 60% of the intelligibility-related stops analyzed for all 3 presenters:

TABLE 5
ESL Specialists' Descriptions of Intelligibility-Related Communication Breakdowns (n=81) Using the Categories in Set 2
N=6

| TAs | Pron. % | Gram. % | Flow % | Volume % | Vocab. % | Organ. % | Clarity % | Other* % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 63.7 | 4.9 | 15.5 | 0.2 | 8.7 | 1.0 | 3.5 | 2.1 |
| I | 66.3 | 9.4 | 3.1 | 0.0 | 17.8 | 2.1 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| H | 65.4 | 1.0 | 8.9 | 3.6 | 14.1 | 0.0 | 2.6 | 4.1 |
| All TAs | 64.6 | 4.4 | 11.7 | 1.2 | 11.6 | 0.9 | 2.9 | 2.4 |

*percentages have been rounded to one decimal place

Five of the six ESL specialists also specified whether stress or intonation (both included under pronunciation) were causing intelligibility problems. Their ratings (not shown here) indicate that 35.8% of all the pronunciation problems identified were due, wholly or in part, to stress errors, while intonation errors accounted for 4.5% of all the pronunciation problems. Table 5 also shows that to a much lesser extent, flow of speech and vocabulary each seem to account for over 10% of the communication breakdowns, but they were frequently listed by the raters in combination with other factors.

As a check-up procedure and in order to diminish the possibility of chance, a second analysis of the breakdowns was performed including only those cases in which three or more students had stopped the videotape (i.e., disregarding the cases in the first two

columns of Table 3), a total of 19 cases. The results can be seen in Table 6:

TABLE 6
ESL Specialists' Classification of Communication Breakdowns (n=19) Using the Categories in Set 2 for all NNSTAs
N=6

| | Pronunciation | Grammar | Flow | Vocabulary | Clarity | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Cases | 107 | 4 | 16 | 41 | 13 | 181 |
| %* | 59.1 | 2.2 | 8.8 | 22.6 | 7.1 | 100 |

*percentages rounded to one decimal place

The results in Table 6 are similar to those in Table 5: pronunciation remains the most frequent category selected by the raters (59.1%). Indeed, pronunciation is a factor affecting lack of intelligibility in all 19 cases analyzed, whether on its own or in combination with other categories. Of the other four categories in Table 6, vocabulary doubled its value in comparison with the results in Table 5, flow of speech and grammar lost some of their value, and clarity more than doubled its value, reversing the order of factors apparent in Table 5.

Taken together, then, the results in Tables 5 and 6 indicate that in a taxonomy of all the possible factors interfering with the intelligibility of the three NNSTAs in the study, pronunciation is the overriding factor and vocabulary is a likely source of unintelligibility when it occurs in combination with pronunciation problems, while speech flow and clarity are occasional problematic factors, also when combined with pronunciation. It is questionable whether grammar should be included in the taxonomy because of its low value, but this negligible effect of grammar indicates, in part, the high grammatical accuracy of the presenters, as reflected in their individual OPT results (see Table 7 below).

**Question 4**: *How does the intelligibility level of the NNSTAs--as reported by the students--relate to the NNSTAs' oral proficiency in English?*

As can be seen in the OPT results (Table 7), all three NNSTAs appear to have the same pronunciation level (about 2.0),

which is described as "often faulty but intelligible with effort" (see Appendix A). In all other categories, however, H's scores are at least .5 higher than K's or I's, which indicates that on the whole H is a more proficient speaker of English than K or I.

TABLE 7
Oral Proficiency Test (OPT) Results

| TAs | Pron. | Speech Flow | Grammar | Vocab. | Organiz | Listen. Comp. | Question Handling | TOTAL SCORE (max:28) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 1.90 | 2.30 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.10 | 3.35 | 3.25 | 19.90 |
| I | 1.90 | 2.75 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 20.65 |
| H | 1.90 | 3.50 | 3.60 | 3.50 | 3.60 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 24.10 |

It may be that H's low score in pronunciation was caused by his high rate of speech, which was almost double that of K's and I's (see Table 1). Indeed, several students who had difficulty understanding H made mention of his fast rate of speech.

This noticeable difference in oral proficiency across presenters corresponds to the average number of communication breakdowns reported for each presenter by the students (see Table 2, last column) but not to the number of cases of communication breakdowns per one hundred words (see Table 3, last column)

To explain this change in pattern, we need to look at I's case more closely. As Table 3 indicates, there were two different words in I's presentation which were not understood by more than fifteen students each. These terms were "catheti" and "adjacent" (the first is a mathematical term in Italian, the second its English translation), with 24 and 18 student-reported communication breakdowns respectively. It was also these two words which accounted for most of the one-word stops reported for I's presentation in Table 2 and for 67.7% of all the communication breakdowns reported by the students during I's presentation.

The high index of unintelligibility caused by these two terms alone underscores the importance of technical vocabulary in NNSTA presentations. In I's case, her inability to use the appropriate technical vocabulary seems to be the one salient feature which made her unintelligible, since her accent does not appear to have been a problem for the students during the last one and a half minutes of her presentation (there were no student stops for the last third of I's presentation). In contrast, although the misuse of technical

vocabulary does not seem to have been as important a factor in K's and H's presentations, students had intelligibility problems with K and H throughout their presentations. Another measure of the NNSTAs' overall oral proficiency in English is reported in Table 8:

TABLE 8
ESL Specialists' Ratings of NNSTAs' Oral English Proficiency
Scale: 1 (poor) to 9 (excellent)
N=5

| TAs | MEAN | STD DEV |
|---|---|---|
| K | 4 | .63 |
| I | 4.2 | .74 |
| H | 6 | .63 |

As can be seen, the ratings of five of the six ESL specialists (one misunderstood this section of the questionnaire) seem to correspond to the OPT scores (Table 7, last column) as well as to the average number of stops per one hundred words (Table 2, last column). In addition, of the six specialists five thought H was ready to be a TA, whereas only one thought I was ready, and none thought K was.

In summary, H appears to be a generally more proficient speaker of English than either I or K. In terms of intelligibility, however, while H is clearly better than K, in one measure (Table 2, last column) his intelligibility is superior to I's, whereas in another measure (Table 3, last column) it is similar. Although I's oral proficiency in English is similar to K's, the students seem to have found her more intelligible than K. A possible explanation for this could be the fact that I's native language, Italian, is closer to English than K's native language, Korean. It might be argued that another variable which could have affected intelligibility was the content of the presentations. However, students did not report this in their post-presentation comments. While it was not in the best interest of this small-scale study to control for such factors, it would seem reasonable to do so in future studies involving a larger sample of NNSTAs. For this study, however, there seems to be some relationship between student reported intelligibility and individual oral proficiency in English, for H appears to be both the most intelligible (Tables 2 & 3) and the most proficient (Tables 7 & 8) of the three NNSTA presenters.

**Question 5**: *How suitable is the methodology devised for the study of NNSTA intelligibility?*

Asking students to provide immediate feedback concerning the intelligibility of an NNSTA is a direct way of assessing the seriousness (frequency and importance) of communication breakdowns in NNSTA presentations. The technique can elicit information not easily obtainable through tests of oral proficiency and evaluation forms, for example. I's case is, once again, a case in point. While her oral proficiency level might lead us to believe that she and K are equally intelligible, the frequency and nature of her communication breakdowns seem to indicate that she is more intelligible than K. Such information can give TA trainers a better indication of which NNSTAs are ready to enter the classroom and which are not.

The knowledge gained from using this technique can also be applied to NNSTA training courses as well as to native-speaking student orientations by drawing the attention of both NNSTAs' and native-speaking students to the factors and words or utterance types most likely to cause communication breakdowns in NNSTA discourse. Addressing NNSTA language communication problems openly may not only have a positive effect on students' attitudes toward NNSTAs, it may make less cooperative students aware that the effort they put into understanding their NNSTA is also a determining factor for communication success.

It might be argued that the data collection technique used in this study (i.e., stopping the tape every time communication broke down) may have had some undesirable effects, such as depriving the listener of part of the context and preventing him/her from making optimal use of repetition, redundancy, and other useful contextual clues. An alternative approach could be to have students be exposed to an entire presentation without interruption and then be asked where communication had broken down for them. Since such a technique, however, would have brought in memory as a factor, some important information about either the process of understanding or particular instances of communication breakdowns would have doubtlessly been lost.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, a group of native English-speaking undergraduate students was given the opportunity to point out to the investigator which words and utterances were actually causing communication breakdowns during three NNSTA presentations. Six ESL specialists then determined which of those communication breakdowns were caused by a lack of intelligibility. They also classified each instance of unintelligibility according to a set of linguistic factors. From this classification it was possible to infer a taxonomy of the factors which interfered with the intelligibility of the NNSTAs under study.

Of the factors identified, pronunciation proved to be the leading cause of unintelligibility in the NNSTA presentations. This finding confirms the results of student perceptions of problematic areas in NNSTA presentations reported by Hinofotis & Bailey (1981) and by Rubin & Smith (1989). In addition to pronunciation problems, vocabulary misuse or difficulty, non-native speech flow, and poor clarity of speech were also found to cause a decrease in intelligibility.

The small size and scope of this study must be kept in mind when considering the application of these findings. Certainly, a larger sample of NNSTAs would be required before generalizations could be made. Follow-up studies might also take into consideration aspects of intelligibility which this study was not designed to address. For example, a discourse analysis of the content and organizational structure of the NNSTA presentations might add valuable information concerning the nature of the communication breakdowns. In addition, it would seem appropriate to further explore the influence of academic discipline, ethnicity, and native language on the intelligibility of NNSTAs.

**Notes**

[1]Revised version of a paper presented at the 23rd Annual TESOL Convention, San Antonio, Texas, 1989.

[2]For reasons of space, the presentation transcripts have not been included here. The researcher will gladly provide copies of the transcripts upon request. Please write to: Juan Carlos Gallego, Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics, UCLA, 405 Hilgard Avenue, 3309 Rolfe Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1531.

[3]From Smith & Nelson (1985).

[4]Based on Hinofotis, Bailey, & Stern (1981, p. 123).

[5]"Word" is interpreted here as a single, complete lexical item, such as "a," or "some," etc. Hesitation devices ("uh," "um," etc.) and incomplete words were not included in the analyses.

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SPEAKING PERFORMANCE SCALE FOR UCLA ORAL PROFICIENCY TEST FOR NONNATIVE TAs*

| RATING | PRONUNCIATION | SPEECH FLOW | GRAMMAR | VOCABULARY | ORGANIZA-TION | LISTENING COMPREHEN-SION | QUESTION-HANDLING |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | rarely mispronounces | high degree of fluency; effortless; smooth | only occasional errors; no pattern; uses high level discourse structures | extensive, appropriate; precise to specific task; includes vocab. explanations to avoid talking over the heads of students | complete, clear, well-developed, logical explanations & discourse clearly marked; sufficient redundancy | appears to understand administrator and undergraduate completely | clear, not usually confused by questions; can clarify misunderstandin gs; no long delay in responding |
| 3 | accents may be foreign; never interferes; rarely disturbs NS** | speaks with facility; rarely has to grope; uses paraphrase & circumlocution easily | full range of basic structures; uses complex structures; mistakes sometimes occur but meaning accurately conveyed | adequate to cover specific task; occasional error with non-critical vocabular | clear explanation with sufficient detail some digressions but not overly redundant | adequate to follow most speech; occasional need for clarification or repetition | responds clearly; may hesitate while responding; may be confused by unclearly stated questions |
| 2 | oten faulty but intelligible; accent may interfere or disturb NS | speaks with confidence but not facility; hesitant; some paraphrasing | meaning accurately expressed in simple sentences; complex grammar avoided | sufficient to speak simply with some circumlocution about the specific task | simple, clear explanation; transitions may be awkward; some lack of supporting examples; may lack necessary redundancy | OK in face-to-face communication of well-known subject mater; frequent need for clarification & explanation | has difficulty responding; unable to clarify unclearly stated questions |

SPEAKING PERFORMANCE SCALE FOR UCLA ORAL PROFICIENCY TEST FOR NONNATIVE TAs*
(Continued)

| RATING | PRONUNCIATION | SPEECH FLOW | GRAMMAR | VOCABULARY | ORGANIZA-TION | LISTENING COMPREHEN-SION | QUESTION-HANDLING |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | errors frequent; usually intellgible to NS used to dealing with NNS*** | slow, strained except for routine expressions | errors frequent but intelligible to NS used to dealing with NNS | lacking in vocabulary necessary to perform the specific task | overall structure of explanation unclear; difficult to follow sequence & develoment of ideas. | some misunderstandin g despite clarification & repetition | often confused by question; may answer illogically |
| 0 | unintelligible | so halting that conversation is impossible | non-existent | inadequate even for simple speech | impossible to follow explanation | inadequate even for simple face-to-face situations | may ignore questions; no strategies to clarify misunderstandi ngs |

*Scales adapted from: The Interagency Language Roundtable Oral Proficiency Interview (1983). *The ILR Handbook on Oral Interview Testing*. Rosslyn, VA: U.S. Government Interagency Language Roundtable; Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
**NS = native speaker
***NNS - non-native speaker
NOTE: Results claimed in this article using an adapted testing instrument should in no way be construed as confirming or denying the validity of the was based, or as possessing any validity of the original test.

EXCHANGE

# Political Applied Linguistics and Postmodernism: Towards an Engagement of Similarity within Difference

## A Reply to Pennycook

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## INTRODUCTION

It is hard to avoid the increasing influence that postmodern thought has had on most fields of human practice. From art to architecture, to dance, television, philosophy, education, politics, and now applied linguistics, postmodern vocabulary and consciousness seem to be materializing into a popular as well as an intellectual discourse.

In the opening article of the inaugural number of *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, Alastair Pennycook (1990) joins this dialogue by delineating assorted meanings of postmodernism. At the outset, I want to affirm that such efforts must be applauded. I, like Pennycook, am both appalled and horrified at the increasingly decrepit conditions of our society. As an educator, I take issue with many institutionalized norms and values, in part because I believe they are among the chief antecedents to the moral and spiritual predicaments of our times (Purpel, 1989). I, like Pennycook, believe that the pedagogical must be more political and the political more pedagogical.[1] Also, like Pennycook, I view the current discourse of modernist linguistics and applied linguistics as hegemonically trapped within a modernist objectification of language.

While I have no wish to undermine Pennycook's provocative and thoughtful article in any way, I do want to react to it on a number of levels. First, I will summarize what I like and dislike about Pennycook's article. I will also attempt to reconcile the modern/postmodern dialectic by sketching out some of the strengths of modernism and using them to bridge the strengths and

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weaknesses of postmodernism. I will then further the modern/postmodern debate by developing a theory of "similarity within difference" (Kanpol, forthcoming [c]). In conclusion, I will situate this theory within the context of critical pedagogy[2] and the political and practical ramifications it can have for the field of applied linguistics. By doing so, I intend to add to Pennycook's basic argument, which began as a robust effort to politicize applied linguistics, but which fell short in its theoretical and practical formulations to do so.

## Pennycook Revisited

Pennycook describes how aspects of applied linguistics are "children of the modernist era" (Pennycook, 1990, p. 10), an era in which, Pennycook cogently argues, language is standardized and objectified and in which a "correspondence theory which assumes a one-to-one correspondence between objects, words and thoughts" exists (p. 11). This modernist condition, contends Pennycook, focuses on both the structure of language and "the individual in cognitive isolation" (p. 12), yet concurrently omits language learning as a referent for a critique of political, historical power and unequal relationships in society.

Pennycook enunciates well the drawbacks of the positivistic methods of quantification in applied linguistics, though in response to these drawbacks, Pennycook asserts that qualitative research methods[3] can become part of a research agenda that situates language within what he calls a critical applied linguistics. Against the backdrop of this critique, Pennycook then posits his major thesis: that a *principled postmodernism* in applied linguistics which "retains a notion of the political and ethical" can be used to counter the hegemonic body of modernist applied linguistic knowledge (p. 17). To strengthen this counter-hegemonic stance, Pennycook cites examples of feminist and third-world critical literature that draw the reader closer to the kind of political and ethical condition Pennycook is headed towards.

After this review of more general critical theory, Pennycook's descriptions of "critical linguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnography and pedagogy" (pp. 23-35) are, taken together, a broad attempt to justify "principled postmodernism" as an emancipatory project needed to undermine the oppressive power relations both in

and out of the classroom. Finally, in his summary, Pennycook succinctly lays the foundation for what a "principled postmodernism" might look like in a discourse of critical applied linguistics.

I find two major weaknesses in Pennycook's article. First, Pennycook has failed to enunciate the positive aspects of modernism. Such an omission weakens his theoretical (and political) position for a critical applied linguistics, while a truly "principled postmodernism" might have considered some of the favorable aspects of modernism and the negative aspects of postmodernism. Second, Pennycook did not attempt to generate a practical agenda to connect with his grand theory. In the following, I respond to these two weaknesses.

## The Best of Modernism Reconciled with Postmodernism

Anticipating later theoretical arguments in this paper, it will be helpful, first, to lay out the basic configurations of both modernism and postmodernism. In its best and often most radical progressive sense, modernism envisages the hope of enlightenment, a commitment to community (Habermas, 1981) through individual reason and reflection, a unity of the individual and society in an ongoing dialectical vision of individual betterment, social progress, human emancipation, and human possibility. Political modernism provides a discourse for "the possibility of developing social relations in which the principles of liberty, justice, and equality provide the basis for democratic struggle" (Giroux, 1990, p. 6). In all fairness, the utopian dreams of modernity are not unworthy and not unlike the dreams of postmodern critics. Indeed, pivotal to both modernism and postmodernism is the idea that the emancipatory possibilities of pluralism and heterogeneity become the basis for both new and struggled for meanings.

Central to the current debate on postmodernism's attack on universal reason, but with a similar "modern" quest for emancipation and liberation, is the ongoing dialogue of what counts as 'difference'.[4] Differences, according to Giroux (1990), are "historically constructed within ideologies and material practices that connect race, class and gender within webbed connections of domination" (p. 8). For the postmodernist, differences are situated within narrative accounts and varying dialects. To deconstruct

differences means redrawing the maps of personal and social history, while concurrently pragmatizing and sensitizing the everyday actions and language of social actors to race, class, and gender struggles.

Within this postmodern condition of "difference," the locus of power shifts from the privileged, the powerful, and those who control, to those struggling groups of people (females and minorities) who seek a measure of control over their own lives. Women's studies in the field of education (e.g., Weiler, 1987; Grumet, 1988) exhibit signs of this postmodern dialogue. The female narrative voice constitutes a discourse that considers difference as one of the vital links to a notion of schools as sites both of gender struggle and of transformative and liberating responses to the hegemonic conditions (in this particular case, patriarchal influences on social relations) of our times.

The major strength of current theories of postmodernism discourse is the potential for infinite deconstruction of meaning. Yet, quite ironically, this strength has also become a weakness: it seems that what is lost within the infinite deconstruction of meaning is *shared* meaning. What could be seen as central to the discourse of difference and disharmony as a referent for critique and advancing emancipatory possibilities is the notion of identity within solidarity, unity, and commonality. Moore (1990) puts it well, I believe, when she comments on Nicholson (1990):

> In the politics of identity there is a mindless celebration of difference as though differences, whether race or gender, operated equally. Everyone knows, surely, that some differences are more different than others. (p. 41)

Gitlin (1990) agrees with Moore, furthering her argument by situating difference in the context of a more radical political dialogue:

> America today, along with its Left, suffers from an exhalation of difference--as if commonality were not also a value. While the Left brandishes the rainbow or the quilt, the Right wraps itself in the flag of "common culture" . . . Functionally, the Left has limited itself to those who think of themselves as members of one or another tribe . . . On what common ground do we (Left) meet to cooperate? (p. 48)

With Gitlin's notion of "common ground" in mind, I argue that the deconstruction of difference and identity by postmodernists (including both educational postmodernists and, for our purposes here, Pennycook) has not allowed for the exploration of similarities of struggle, affirmation, and hope that lead to notions of community, identity, and their interrelatedness. Also missing is a notion of solidarity of difference and/or commonality of difference that connects people to common democratic struggles in an effort to end subordination.[5] To further the modern/postmodern debate, a theory is needed to interrelate "common ground" and "difference."

## Similarity within Difference: The Other

One way to bridge the modern and postmodern debate *without* seeking closure for ultimate truth is to theorize about similarity within differences. To do so would allow educators to empathize and better understand marginalized peoples. At the base of anyone's difference, I argue, lie the similarities of oppression, pain, and feelings, albeit in different forms. For instance, all immigrants share similar experiences. Some immigrants are hegemonized by a patriarchal father and subservient mother. Other immigrants may live as minorities in foreign countries, illiterate in the dominant language. Some immigrants assimilate into a new culture better than others. Many share a low socio-economic status and the drudgery of alienating work. Yet, there is no reason why I as an educator cannot empathize with marginalized peoples though I could never meet them all. Given my own life experiences, I can identify with those who have felt alienation and certain forms of suffering and oppression, even though our respective particular circumstances may have differed.

What is sorely lacking within postmodern literature, then, (including Pennycook's article) is attention to both a theory and politics of similarity within difference and a politics of identity "that highlights questions of equality, justice and liberty as part of an ongoing democratic struggle" (Giroux, 1990, p. 13) in which race and ethnicity become the "center of a radical politics of democracy differences and cultural struggle" (Giroux, 1990, p. 3).

Central to a politics of similarity within difference is empathizing with the other,[6] an "other" which can be used

interchangeably to mean marginalized peoples or the empathetic incorporation of the attitudes and values of the community one teaches in. To empathize with either of these forms of "other" is to transcend one's own view of what counts as correct culture, and, instead, understand, incorporate, and change oneself within the other culture for a common, intersubjective, emancipatory purpose.

To understand and empathize with the "other" becomes a postmodern challenge which assumes different forms within different areas of popular culture, such as cinema, art, dance, and theatre (Giroux & Simon, 1988, 1989). No less important for postmodernists is to connect the struggle and resistance of different groups to a theory that highlights commonality, community, and sharing. While the identity of struggles could first be viewed as bound within their discursive difference in place, time, and meaning, they are also connected by their commonality--possibly as an attempt to end alienation, oppression, and subordination.

Practical examples from qualitative research on teachers in the field of education may help clarify similar, yet concurrently different, struggles (Kanpol, 1988, 1989, 1990, forthcoming [a], [b], [c], [d]). The differences of these teachers' struggles have involved power relationships with administrations, gender and race struggles, and continual battles to use teacher-generated pragmatic curricula rather than officially mandated ones. Yet, the similarities of these struggles have revolved around teachers challenging dehumanizing rating scales, alienating accountability schemes, rigid rule structures, uncreative "teacher-proof" standardized curricula, and authoritarian on-site management. Both in and out of class, teachers in these studies found ways to challenge dominant ideological propensities, such as rampant individualism and negative competition.[7] Such teacher challenges to dominant values had at their base the commonality of a democratic discourse that deconstructed difference yet seriously considered similarities. Indeed, these cultural and value-based struggles represented the *politicizing of schools* in and out of the classroom in the most practical sense. Educational researchers (e.g., Willis, 1977; Apple, 1986; Fine, 1988; Ellsworth, 1989; McLaren, 1989) provide a context for viewing the practical and ideological struggles of male and female students as well as the practical and ideological struggles of teachers within issues of curriculum development and implementation, race, class, and sex. What is suggested in these studies is a dialectic of modernist and postmodernist theoretical discourse that seeks to politicize schools by revealing how power

and authority as well as similarity and difference are negotiated in practice.

## Similarity within Difference as Applied to Critical Applied Linguistics

As a response to what I consider to be the first major weakness in Pennycook's article, I have suggested in essence that "critical applied linguistics" become even *more* political and emancipatory in its theorizing than Pennycook's call for a "principled postmodernism": that we consider similarities within difference as an *extension* of a theory of postmodern applied linguistics concerned merely with the politics and ethics of difference. In response to the second major weakness of Pennycook's article, I want to suggest a practical agenda for ESL teachers and critical applied linguists, which necessitates seriously considering the use of critical pedagogy as a teaching tool.

At this point I must mention some surprise at Pennycook for overlooking the work of the leading critical pedagogue of our times, Paulo Freire (1974, 1985), as a reference for a political agenda in critical applied linguistics. Freire's associations with peasant workers led him to conclude that language cannot be separated from social and political conditions. He thus sought to promote the cultural transformation of the peasants by revising their critical consciousness and engaging them in a struggle against oppressive social structures. In order to help achieve this goal, Freire linked peasants' vocabulary, ideas, and values to their lives. Interestingly, these peasant struggles, while individually different, were bound by their commonality to end their alienation, oppression, and subordination. In the spirit of Freire, what I am about to offer is not a prescription of "what to do on Monday morning" or how, but, rather, a principled, political, practical, and "Freirian" account of what a theory of similarities within difference might look like in real classroom situations.

In a recently completed naturalistic study (Kanpol, forthcoming [c], [d]) in a school where the student population was 82% Hispanic, four of the five teachers studied were English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Interestingly, their pedagogical strategies were directly linked to the kind of postmodernism that I have been theorizing about, for within their pedagogy, community,

difference, and similarity were celebrated. This orientation became, whether consciously or unconsciously, these teachers' critical pedagogy. Before I highlight these points with three examples, I ask the reader to keep two thoughts in mind. First, the following examples revolve around teacher-student interaction in some form. Second, these examples connect the positive traits of modernism--community, reflection and human possibility--with the postmodern challenge to both accept and understand difference.

## 1. Use of Text to Recall History

In one ESL class, a short story, "The Lady or the Tiger" (Stockton, 1980), was used as the basis for a vocabulary, comprehension, and structured grammar lesson. But the story was also used to generate discussion about individual choice, freedom, and the question "what is right?" The Egyptian ESL teacher began the class by recounting her history: her entrance and the hardships she faced as an immigrant to the United States. She then encouraged discussion on individual differences and choice in each student's life. Yet the students' differences were combined with similarity when the text was introduced as a depiction of the dilemmas faced by everyone when confronted with free choice. The result was that a sense of community grew out of similarity within differences. While the ESL language-teaching context was important to this teacher, it was clearly an enterprise secondary to the more pressing issues of developing political awareness about choice, freedom, and right in student's minds.

## 2. Use of Film to Question Stereotypes

In another ESL class, a teacher who had previously lived in Mexico for three years showed her students a Spanish-language film with English subtitles.[8] The film was used for vocabulary practice and discussion, but, more typically, to develop communicative competence. The hidden curriculum[9] of the lesson involved making the students aware of the plot in which the stereotypic macho and patriarchal father uses all his guile to woo his daughter into sexual submission. When she refuses, he locks her up in an attic in their house without access to food or water. The film ends with the daughter denying her father's advances and dying of starvation in

his arms. The ensuing discussion in class revolved around the issues of stereotype and rightness, among other matters. Interestingly, 75% of this class were males. Some admitted that the macho image of males in their households was not much different from that depicted in the film. Others admitted that in their families men were not like the father in the film. It was clear that the students had had different male and female experiences, yet had shared similar confrontations with sexual stereotypes. The teacher eventually revealed her intent to challenge students' stereotypes, and in the context of this ESL lesson students *were* challenged, through their own similarities and differences, to question and reflect on hegemonic thought processes concerning family ties and sexual roles.

## 3. Cooperative Learning as a Challenge to Individualism: A Move to Individuality

In a third ESL class, a teacher facilitated language games, puzzles, and exercises with synonyms and antonyms in the context of cooperative learning situations, a pedagogy used, unconsciously I believe, as a form of resistance to individualism. Beyond the English language learned, this teacher downplayed individual testing and excessive competition among students by basing a student's worth on individual and group effort rather than on such dehumanizing criteria as numerical achievement. Students learned to accept individual differences within groups yet responded as a team on issues of vocabulary choice. As tolerance became the denominator of similarity for individual members of groups, despite individual student differences, typical student competition for high grades was deemphasized. Such challenges to dominant ideological propensities can occur (though not always) within the context of "cooperative language learning," and did occur within the context of similarity (tolerance, team effort, sharing) and difference (individual likes and dislikes).

The above examples suggest that the ESL lesson does not only serve a language-teaching purpose but consciously or unconsciously can challenge dominant ideological assumptions. As a theorist/researcher in the social foundations of education, what interests me most in these *practical* examples of similarity within difference are the particular social and political implications which make up the classroom agenda, less so the facilitation of mere

language learning and use. On a more *theoretical* tack, to separate modernism and postmodernism as oppositional, mutually exclusive theoretical formulations simply reinforces division and antagonism among academics (Ellsworth, 1989). Instead, we should search for modernistic similarities within postmodern differences, which in their joint formulation consider multiple realities (containing modern and postmodern aspects) that open up dialogue for any community to flourish, whether in or out of academe.

## CONCLUSION

In short, the deconstruction of language with similarities and differences at its core can become an intersubjective, counter-hegemonic, postmodern, political, and applied linguistic project to end oppression. Teachers at all levels of education have the power not only to help students assimilate into the mainstream culture; they can also use "assimilation" as a social and political tool to transform consciousness by bringing into focus the similarities within differences.

The political and practical stances within schools that derive from the heavy theoretical formulations that Pennycook and I have proposed in our dialogue would be manifested by such actions as teachers both questioning and changing the tracking system of ESL students; teachers questioning and redesigning mainstream and gate-keeping exams; teachers taking a stand to choose a curriculum devoid of sexual and racial bias; teachers being better informed about state decision-making which affects all these matters; teachers actively partaking in union activities to improve working conditions. Only when these sorts of issues are acted upon can a truly critical applied linguistics within a postmodernism project become a theoretical referent and a political tool to challenge mainstream consciousness, epistemological certainty, and ideological tentativeness. Only then may the possibility of emancipatory practice be realized as a celebration of differences and a fundamental coming together in union and solidarity over similarities.

**Notes**

[1]For more on the pedagogical and political, see Aronowitz & Giroux's (1985) discussion on the transformative intellectual. For Aronowitz & Giroux, *political* refers specifically to the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes (or cultural capital) that transpires between teachers and students. This is the sense of my use of the word 'political' throughout this manuscript.

[2]Critical pedagogy is used as a teaching strategy to question and be critical of dominant cultural values and power relations such as excess competition, individualism, racism, and sexism. Within this pedagogy, students are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences as they relate to these dominant values. The intent is to help emancipate students from dogmatic to liberating forms of thinking on these issues.

[3]Pennycook fails to elaborate on the various methods of qualitative research. For instance, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism would surely be a large part of qualitative research and could also be used to illuminate the drawbacks of positivistic applied linguistics. The issue of what *kind* of qualitative research should be used for a critical applied linguistics is an important issue not treated by Pennycook.

[4]A deconstruction of 'difference' is an ongoing debate among philosophers (Derrida, 1986; Wood, 1987).

[5]Due to space limitations, I have avoided a discussion of the democratic nature of struggle. In my upcoming book, I deal with these issues in far greater depth (Kanpol, forthcoming [c). For further discussion on democratic struggle, see Laclau & Mouffe (1985), Laclau (1988), and Mouffe (1988). The nature of this struggle is intimately connected to intersubjective conditions of existence. For an excellent discussion on intersubjectivity, see Dallmayr (1981), especially Chapter 2.

[6]Pennycook sporadically refers to the "other" without elaborating how this "other" has its own voice, language, history, etc.

[7]Negative competition can be compared to positive competition. The latter implies competition without conflict, conforming to rules in a context in which the goals for everyone are just. Negative competition creates disharmony (conflict) among group members since the goals for everyone are discriminatory and unfair. For more, see Rich (1988). Rampant individualism in this context refers to the quest for general human supremacy with the goal of domination in mind. Individualism is the opposite of individuality, the prizing of individual talent. For more on this, see Dallmayr (1981, pp. 2-9).

[8]*Delgadina* [film], Audio Post Production, Russian Hill Recording.

[9]The "hidden curriculum" refers to implicit, moral, and ideological assumptions routinely passed on to students. In its strongest and least emancipatory sense, the hidden curriculum refers to the hegemonic body of knowledge that places students in subordinate social positions. For more, see Anyon (1980, 1981).

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