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The Link between ESL Students' Social Identities and Their Right to Speak in English

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the link between ESL students' social identities and their opportunities to speak in English. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) concept of the right to speak, the researcher emphasized the importance of ESL students' opportunities to speak in the development of their communicative skills and examined how their opportunities to speak were structured according to their social positioning by using multiple sources of data, such as participants' autobiographies, journals, participant observation, interview, and fieldnotes. The results revealed that ESL students' social identities and their opportunities to speak were closely related because being an outsider of the mainstream prevented them from engaging in intensive social interaction with other English speakers, whereas becoming an insider of the mainstream facilitated their social interaction processes through which they could be exposed to varied interactive resources and practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

American universities are now admitting large numbers of international students from all over the world. It is commonly assumed that these students have multiple opportunities to interact with English speakers because they attend universities where English is officially spoken. In reality, their opportunities to speak are often limited. Through many years of studying in the U.S., the researcher found that many international students lack opportunities to interact in English and came to realize that there is a direct link between their identities and social interactions. For instance, their lack of access to mainstream culture limits their interactional opportunities in English and their limited opportunities to speak English result in a negative self-image in terms of their English abilities. Such negative image constrains their speaking development and their overall academic and social success.

According to Norton (2000), any social interaction could be understood in terms of

power relations between interlocutors and the on-going production of speakers' identities because social interaction is not only communication between people but also an arena where interlocutors' identities are negotiated and renegotiated. In a larger sense, our participation in social interaction is mediated by who we are, how we perceive our interlocutors, and how we think they perceive us and in actual social interaction, it is asymmetrical power relations that exclude a speaker from active participation in it (Heller, 1987; Tajifel, 1982). That is, power relations in the social world impact the social interactions between second language learners and target language speakers because second language learners often position themselves and are positioned as non-native and incompetent speakers of English during social interactions with target language speakers.

It appears that in American university settings, recently arrived ESL students may feel marginalized due to the lack of English speaking proficiency similar to immigrants in the larger society. In order to successfully participate in mainstream social and cultural contexts, they are required to acquire the majority language, English and yet they cannot acquire it without participation and interaction. Communicative ability including linguistic, social, cultural, and cognitive skills is extremely important in the process of self-redefinition and adjustment in a new context (Trueba, 1989). However, many newly arrived students struggle as they are learning English because learning English is not only about acquiring a set of rules in morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics but also about negotiation and renegotiation of self in discursive practices of everyday life.

According to Savignon (1991), participation in communicative events leads to language learning. These social interactions are thus a crucial factor in the mastery of discourse and sociocultural rules as they provide language learners with numerous chances to improve their speaking proficiency socially and academically. If they do not participate in social interactions with target language speakers at school, they cannot acquire spoken English (Miller, 1999, 2000). According to Bakhtin (1981), it is through participation that speakers discover patterns in the interactive practices where they engage with other people, observe and reflect on the other's interactive moves, and construct their own responses to these patterns. In other words, they will be able to develop a range of voices, what Bakhtin (1986, p. 96) called "ventriloquation" (i.e., reconstruct utterances for our purposes from resources available to us), through participation in social interaction with others. However, we know very little about how these interactive opportunities are structured. By undertaking a rigorous investigation of the relationship between ESL students' social identities and their opportunities to speak, this study sought to understand unexplored factors that facilitated and/or constrained ESL students' social interaction processes.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this section, the researcher will provide a set of theoretical frameworks, such as social dimensions of language learning and Bourdieu's (1977, 1991) concept of the right to speak, applicable to investigating the complexities of the relationship between ESL students' social identities and their opportunities to speak.

1. Social Dimensions of Language Learning

From its early days, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been a diverse field, with a variety of disciplinary perspectives. However, it is fair to say that the dominant theoretical influences in SLA have been linguistic and psycholinguistic approaches with the focus on the individual learner (Ellis, 1994; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 1994; Hall, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Rampton, 1997). In these approaches, SLA is seen as a mental process and only takes place in the human mind. As a result, SLA theorist in these paradigms have commonly viewed the learner as an individual with fixed characteristics whose identity can be reducible to a subject or located in a binary distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers (Firth & Wagner, 1997).

Recently, more socially oriented perspectives on SLA emerged within the field. The proponents of these approaches emphasize that "mental processes are not unimportant but also they are situated in a larger socio-cultural context that is equally important" (Davis, 1995, p. 432) and argue that individually oriented SLA research cannot successfully account for the language learning process because the language learning process is essentially social (Davis, 1995; Day, 2002; Miller, 1999, 2000; Norton, 2000). Their primary concern has been not how learners internalize a set of rules in a second language but to what extent "the complex social context that interpenetrates individual functioning" has to do with processes and the development of language learning, let alone language learning outcomes (Willett, 1995, p. 474).

Thus, they have emphasized that individualistically oriented SLA research marginalizes and at times ignores the social and contextual dimensions of language learning and have argued that the field of SLA needs to develop a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrate language learners and language learning contexts because language learners are not passive but active agents whose identities are constructed and reconstructed through participation in discursive practices in the social world where asymmetrical power relations exists (Norton, 2000).

Indeed, poststructuralist theory allows SLA researchers to investigate the role of power relations in social interaction between language learners and target language speakers because it attempts to theorize the relationship between "language, subjectivity, social

organization, and power” and underscores the role of language in construction and production of social relations (Weedon, 1987, p. 14). Poststructuralist theory tries to integrate language, individual experience, and social power in a theory of subjectivity. According to Weedon (1987), subjectivity is constructed in many social sites, all of which are shaped by power relations in which the person takes up different subject positions, such as teacher, student, and so on. Thus, it allows SLA researchers to conceptualize language learners as members of multiple communities of practice with complex social identities that must be understood with reference to inequitable social structure, which are produced and reproduced in day-to-day social interaction (Norton, 2000).

Therefore, in order to better understand ESL students’ social interaction processes, the researcher traced how their opportunities to speak had been constructed according to how their social identities had been constructed. Inspired by Gee’s (1996) notion of identity enactment that identity is enacted through a three-way simultaneous interaction between our social or cultural memberships, a particular social language or mixture of them, and a particular context, she explored which language they used (i.e., their first languages or English) in which contexts (i.e., a sense of contexts which requires their first languages or English), and which social or cultural groups they belonged to by looking at the friends they associated with and their in-and-out-of school activities in order to obtain an insight of how their social identities had been constructed. Then, she examined how their social identities had to do with their opportunities to speak.

2. Right to Speak

Bourdieu (1977, 1991) focused on the relationship between language and power. His concept of legitimate speaker and legitimate discourse could provide a window to closely look at how unequal relations of power in a society affected language learners’ opportunities to speak and how asymmetrical symbolic power attached to the different speakers affected a speaker’s right to speak as well as an ability to command the listener in actual interactions with target language speakers. What prevents language learners from engaging in social interaction? What makes them reticent during social interactions with target language speakers, which can give them numerous chances to develop their communicative competence? Bourdieu’s (1977, 1991) concepts are useful in understanding these questions because he understood that linguistic exchanges were not intellectual operations of coding or decoding grammatically well-formed utterances but reflection of power relations. Therefore, language learners’ communicative competence must be understood in terms of how they relate to the social world because if they were marginalized with no right to speak due to unequal relations of power in society and in actual social interaction, they will lose their chances to improve communicative competence. He emphasized that a communicative

event occurred only when the speaker was recognized as a legitimate speaker and argued that the expanded definition of communicative competence should include the right to speak.

Drawing on Bourdieu (1977, 1991), some scholars in the field of SLA have claimed that an awareness of the right to speak is a viable factor, which can influence language learning outcomes (McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 1999, 2000; Norton, 2000). They, drawing on Bourdieu's concept of legitimate usage, have emphasized that one must be a legitimate speaker in order to be a member of a communicative event and in order to be a legitimate speaker in communicative event, one must be aware of his/her right to speak and to be heard in that communicative event and thus they have insisted that the definition of communicative competence cannot fully explain a language learner's communicative competence due to the lack of consideration of inequitable relations of power during social interaction.

It appears that language learners' access to interactional chances, opportunities to speak, is important in SLA in two ways. First, it is important for language learners in ESL context to know what types of interactional chances are available to them and how these chances are socially shaped in order to obtain an awareness of and a sensitivity to power relationships in social interactions and to understand how relations of power are implicated in the process of social interaction. Through an understanding of how power acts on during social interaction, they might gain insights on how to challenge social practice of marginalization and to increase their right to speak (Norton, 2000).

Second, it is crucial for language learners in learning and developing their speaking skills in two ways. First, they can learn spoken language through participation in interactive practices in which they can discover interactive patterns used by others, observe, reflect on other's participatory moves, the response on these moves, and create their own responses to these patterns (Hall, 1995). Second, it is facilitative in developing their speaking skills. From a Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, individual development of speaking skills first begins in the social relationships. Knowledge and cognition are dialogically constructed and learning takes place when learners are in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Through participation in social interactions with others, language learners can be apprenticed as competent speakers of English through the scaffolded help from other interlocutors and they can eventually construct their own utterances beyond what each can individually produce (Ohta, 2000). This scaffolding along with the internalization of the language occurring social interaction can foster their development of speaking skill (Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002).

As it was mentioned earlier, claiming the right to speak is an integral part of developing a language learner's communicative skill. So far, however, little attention has been paid to the L2 learner's interactional opportunities in L2. To fill this gap, the researcher connected the notion of the right to speak to the study and undertook a rigorous investigation of how recently arrived ESL students' interactional opportunities were shaped.

III. METHODS

1. Research Question

To better understand how newly arrived ESL students' interactional opportunities were shaped with reference to the social world, the researcher looked at how their social identities had been constructed. Specifically, she traced how their social identities had been shaped by looking at their group memberships, language use, and context because these three factors were used for understanding one's identity enactment (Gee, 1996). Then, she examined how their opportunities to speak had been shaped according to their social positioning. The following research question was investigated in this study: What is the relationship between recently arrived ESL students' social identities and their opportunities to speak? The term, social identities, that appears in the research question above refers to a sense of belonging to a particular social group, such as a student organization. The term, opportunities to speak, that appears in the research questions above refers to any kind of social interaction in English.

2. Research Design

The research is a case study because the essence of the study is a careful and holistic look at three students, such as newly arrived international students speaking English as a second language in a U.S. university (McMillan, 2000). Case study is useful in that the goal of the study is concerned with discovering and describing ESL students' experiences in depth. By using a variety of methods of data collection, such as participants' journals, autobiographies, participant observation, interviews, and fieldnotes, the researcher could discover the insider's view of reality and such data provided her with an expanded picture of the phenomenon of L2 learning.

3. Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at a U.S. university located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from

October 2002 to May 2003. The researcher focused on three recently arrived international students, Takashi, Yoko, and Diana. Although the background information for the three students varied, their length of residence at Y university in the U.S. fell into the range from 10 to 17 months. Takashi was a 21 year-old male from Japan and his first language was Japanese. He was a sophomore studying environmental studies at Y university. Yoko was a 28 year-old female from Japan and her first language was Japanese. She got a Bachelor's degree in English language and literature in Japan. She was a freshman studying communication at Y university. Diana was a 21 year-old female from Senegal and her first language was French. She was a sophomore majoring in psychology at Y university.

4. Data Collection Methods

To answer the research question, the researcher collected participants' autobiographies, journals, did participant observation, kept fieldnotes, and conducted interview.

1) Participants' Autobiographies

In recent years, some researchers in SLA have emphasized the importance of second language learners' autobiographies as a viable data source (McGroarty, 1998; Pavlenko, 1998; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Autobiographies and memoirs are useful for investigating SLA phenomena because they can provide numerous observations about the subjective aspects of language learning experience and shed light on multiple links between language, experience, and identity (McGroarty, 1998). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) stressed the importance of first person narratives because they could provide a much richer source of data than do third person observations. In this respect, participants' autobiographies could illuminate not only the ways in which their social identities and opportunities to speak had been shaped as they had settled down in a new environment but also the link between their social identities and opportunities to speak (for sample, see Appendix A).

In order to elicit exact information, participants were given instruction on how to develop their autobiographies and asked to write their autobiographies in their first languages. Although they are literate in English, due to the short length of residence in the U.S., it is more convenient and comfortable for them to express their feelings and experiences in their first languages. After collecting participants' autobiographies, the researcher gave them to two bilingual translators who translated them into English.

2) Participants' Journals

Participants were asked to keep journals once a week with an emphasis on how their

opportunities to speak had been constructed through their lives. They were given instruction on how to develop their journals and asked to keep their journals in their first languages (for sample, see Appendix B). Again, their journals were translated into English by the bilingual translators discussed earlier.

3) Participant Observation

The researcher observed each participant in a student lounge for one hour twice a month. She focused on which languages the students used with whom and which social or cultural groups they belonged to in order to explore their identity enactment because memberships and language use framed identity work, “the processes of identification with some and difference from others” (Miller, 1999, p. 152).

4) Fieldnotes

After each participant observation, the researcher kept fieldnotes including descriptions of what was observed as well as my interpretations. Her assumption is that nothing is trivial, so whatever was seen, heard or experienced was recorded and considered. The fieldnotes included two kinds of information. The first kind of information was descriptive. The aim of the description was to use words and drawings that captured the detailed of what had occurred. The second kind of information in the fieldnotes was reflective. It included her speculations, feelings, interpretations, ideas, and impressions about what she observed (McMillan, 2000).

5) Interview

The researcher prepared topics and issues to be covered in advance. Questions in interview was related to how participants’ opportunities to speak had been shaped with whom and under what conditions (for sample, see Appendix C). Each interview was conducted at an empty classroom at Y university, lasted approximately 30 minutes, and transcribed afterwards.

5. Data Analysis Methods

The researcher first read the data several times in order to look for words, phrases, or events that seemed to stand out and created codes and sub-codes for these topics. She used “families of codes” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 171) because they could be applied to most case studies. Second, she summarized the data by writing information on cards

into piles according to different codes. Third, she looked for relationships among categories and patterns that might suggest generalizations. For instance, she compared codes and subcategories to make sense of the meaning of the data and did creative thinking in order to articulate underlying concepts about what particular patterns emerged. Then, she interpreted the findings inductively, synthesized the information, and drew inferences.

Most importantly, she used multiple sources of data for data triangulation, which attempts to arrive at the same meaning by at least three different independent approaches. Triangulation is the best ways of checking validity of her study because triangulation prevents the researcher from relying on initial impressions, helps correct for observer biases, and enhances the development of valid construct during the study (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Thus, triangulation allowed her to check validity of her study by comparing different kinds of data and methods to see whether they could corroborate one another.

Specifically, she developed codes based on a "family of codes" proposed by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 171). She used "process codes," "activity codes," and "relationship and social structure codes" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 171-175). Process codes refer to words and phrases that facilitate organizing sequences of event and changes over time and they are used for viewing people over a period of time. Process codes were useful for analyzing her data in that these codes were effective ways of ordering one's life history.

As for activity codes, they refer to regularly occurring kinds of behaviors, such as participating in school activities (i.e., extracurricular activities, etc.) and out-of-school activities, such as going to the movies, and so on. These codes were helpful in analyzing the types of conversation the participants usually engaged in their daily lives. Through these codes, she was able to find not only the types of conversation in which they engaged in but also their language use patterns (i.e., their first languages or English) in everyday life.

In addition, she developed relationship and social structure codes. They refer to regular patterns of behavior defined by organization, such as friendship, coalition, and social roles (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994). Data that directed attention to participants' friendship and their social roles or positions were included into this category. What she found from these codes was who participants' friends were, what kinds of social activities they had, and what kinds of social memberships they had at Y university. By utilizing these codes, she could obtain insights on how the participants related to the social world and what kinds of interactional access they had in their social lives.

IV. THE WAYS IN WHICH YOKO'S SOCIAL IDENTITY MEDIATES HER OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK

Yoko has been adamant in using English since she came to the U.S. to attend Y university.

Okay, I usually I mean most of the time speak English in the U.S. of course and because I am in the U.S., I want to improve my English. So I try not to be with my Japanese friends and I try to go to shopping by myself so I do not have to use Japanese and I can only use English. So for example, On Saturday, I went to the East Station market to shop for the food. At that time, I walked a lot and I asked a clerk many questions about bakery stuffs and we chatted a little bit. And then at that time, I did not buy anything I just wanted to talk something. (Interview, November 25, 2002)

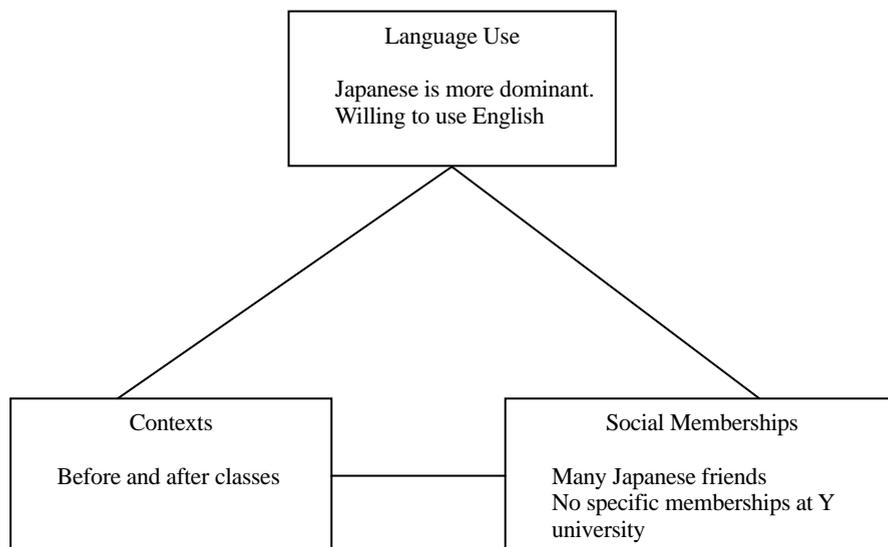
Her response to the question, "Do you think you frequently speak English in the U.S.?", can show her desire to be assimilated into a new context. In fact, her attempt to minimize Japanese in her daily interaction could create contexts where she could use English, which eventually gave her chances to establish allies with other people who speak English. She knows that she needs a good command of English in order to study in the U.S. as a college student. In other words, she values social interaction for the access that gives her chances to improve her speaking as well as academic skills. Although she tried to avoid using Japanese, the presence of her Japanese friends made her use more Japanese for the first few months at Y university.

Since I used to have a Japanese roommate, I had to speak Japanese home. So we always interact with each other in Japanese at home (Journal, December 19, 2002)

I used to hang out Japanese friends... I often talked to my instructors about problems I was having before and after classes... If I have time, I talk to classmates about the course we are taking and what we do before and after classes. (Autobiography, May 20, 2003)

As illustrated in Yoko's data, although she used English at an early stage, it was not extensive because she had less access to the social networks where people spoke English. Figure 1 shows her identity construction at an early stage. Despite the fact that she was willing to use English, Japanese was more dominant in her daily interaction because she showed her sense of belonging to the Japanese students.

FIGURE 1
Yoko's Identity Construction at an Early Stage



However, it is noticeable that her in-and-out-of school activities were getting fraught with English as time went by.

On Monday, one of my roommates' friends came to see her. Actually, she has been travelling around. So we went out to dinner together. (Journal, March 23, 2003)

When I go out to eat and grocery and/or window shopping, I talk a lot with employees there. (Autobiography, May 20, 2003)

We talk before and after the class. Sometimes we hang out outside the class and have a talk a little bit. So I mostly talk in English at school with my classmates (Journal, February 9, 2003).

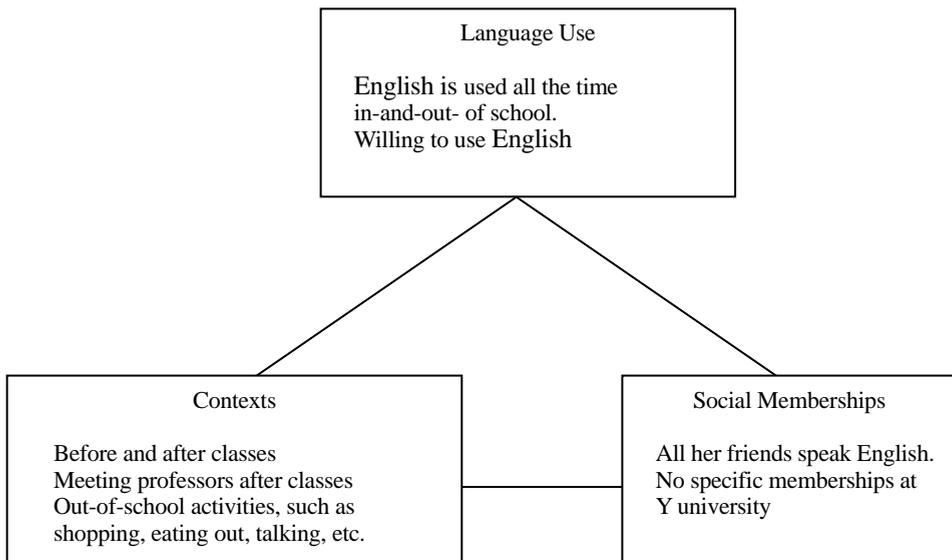
When I see one of my classmates outside the class, If I have time, I try to talk with them to improve my speaking ability (Journal, February 16, 2003).

Yoko was seated with her several friends, such as a Rumanian male student, an American male student, a Japanese male student, and talking about the money issue in a man and woman relationship. (Fieldnotes, April 22, 2003)

As illustrated in Yoko's data, her language use and contexts were filled with English, which is an indication of her becoming an insider of the mainstream. Figure 2 indicates her identity construction at a later stage. Unlike other participants, she did not participate in

extracurricular activities at Y university because her being older than other students might affect her sense of belonging to the groups. However, she tried to find other niches where she could be easily assimilated by using her resolution of using English. For instance, she tried to establish a network of friendships through her roommate and actively engaged in conversation with her classmates before and after classes to build alliances with them.

FIGURE 2
Yoko's Identity Construction at a Later Stage



Clearly, using English could move her among contexts where English was necessary and give her opportunities to try out new memberships in the mainstream. At a later stage, Yoko enacted her identity that established distance from outsiders, the Japanese group and proximity to insiders, the mainstream groups, which could eventually provide her more interactional chances.

Her becoming an active participant in the mainstream could create plenty of chances to speak English with other people in-and-out-of school activities.

Yoko was talking with her friend about their middle and high school experiences, personality, the differences between the concept of friendship in Japan and in the U.S. (Fieldnotes, February 4, 2003)

She talked about her depressions with her friends and why she got upset about her Korean friend. (Fieldnotes, April 5, 2003)

I started picking words through my surroundings. So whenever I heard new

words and expressions, I tried to remember and use dictionary to confirm meanings of the words. Also I tried to go out during weekends to use English. I went window-shopping to communicate with native speakers. I asked them questions. They answered my questions and they also gave me their preferences. I never knew that there were many expressions of things if I did not communicate with them. (Autobiography, May 20, 2003)

Since all her friends used English, she had to use English all the time. Her daily interaction in English was linguistically rich because she could learn new words and expressions she had not known through engagement of interaction with other people and most importantly, she asked her interlocutors questions a lot in the course of interactions, which could assist her comprehension of topics being discussed as well as make input she was exposed to meaningful. According to Pica (1998), interaction could facilitate second language learning if it has negotiation of meaning in which interlocutors scaffold one another by segmenting and repeating previous utterances as well as questioning in that it could make message meaning comprehensible to interlocutors. In this respect, her interactions with other people might be an asset that will facilitate her processes of developing speaking skill.

To sum up, her identity, becoming an active participant in the mainstream activities, could provide her with multiple chances to speak English with others. Interestingly, her efforts to use English could provide not only an arena where she could practice English but also chances to try out more memberships, both of which could expose her to various interactive resources and practices.

V. THE WAYS IN WHICH TAKASHI'S SOCIAL IDENTITY MEDIATES HIS OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK

When Takashi first came to the U.S. to attend Y university, his identity was solely tied to being Japanese because he established a network of friendships with only Japanese friends and exclusively used Japanese in-and-out-of school. The dorm he lived was a place for international students attending universities adjacent to Y university. Here and in school, English was a medium of communicating with other students. However, he only spent time with Japanese friends in-and-out-of his school activities, such as going to the movies, eating out, going to the parties and so on.

He was seated with Japanese friends in the corner of the student lounge. They were mostly talking one another in Japanese. (Fieldnotes, November 30,

2002)

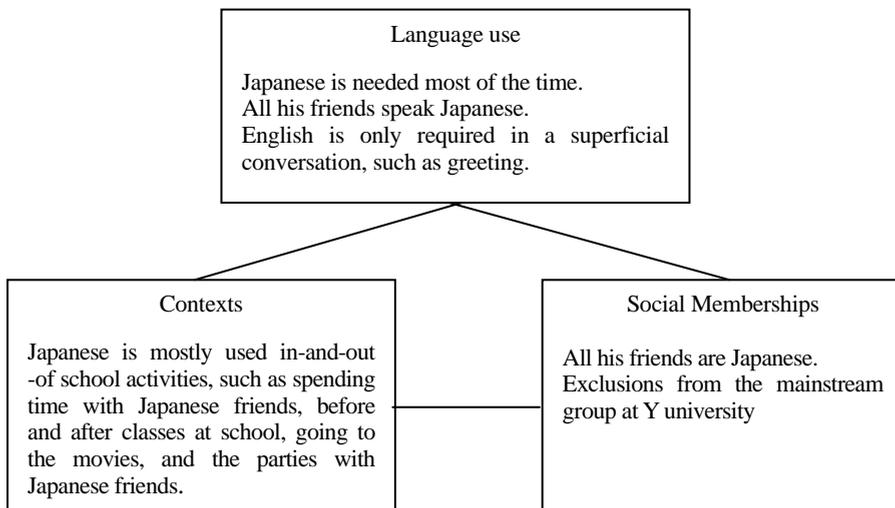
There has been much going on so far during the winter break. E-house has been empty since the break started. All left in my suit is me and Ken, a Taiwanese guy. Since many Japanese students are staying in E-house for the holidays, I speak Japanese most of the time. (Journal, January 7, 2003)

I speak more Japanese because I have more Japanese friends. (Journal, December 20, 2003)

Again, I hardly used English last week since I got to hang out with friends from Y university in Japan most of the time. It feels like I am in Japan. (Journal, January 21, 2003)

As illustrated in Takashi’s data above, he was immersed in Japanese in and out of school because he had strong alliance to the Japanese student membership, which shows his exclusion from the mainstream. Figure 3 shows that English was not needed in his in-and-out-of school activities due to the fact that he mostly used Japanese, moved among contexts where English was not necessary, and had memberships where Japanese was mostly appropriate. Thus, it is noticeable that his identity was strongly linked to being a complete outsider of the mainstream, being Japanese, during his early stage in a new milieu.

FIGURE 3
Takashi’ Identity Construction at an Early Stage



As he was getting settled down in a new environment, his identity started changing from being a complete outsider to becoming an insider of the mainstream. He used his

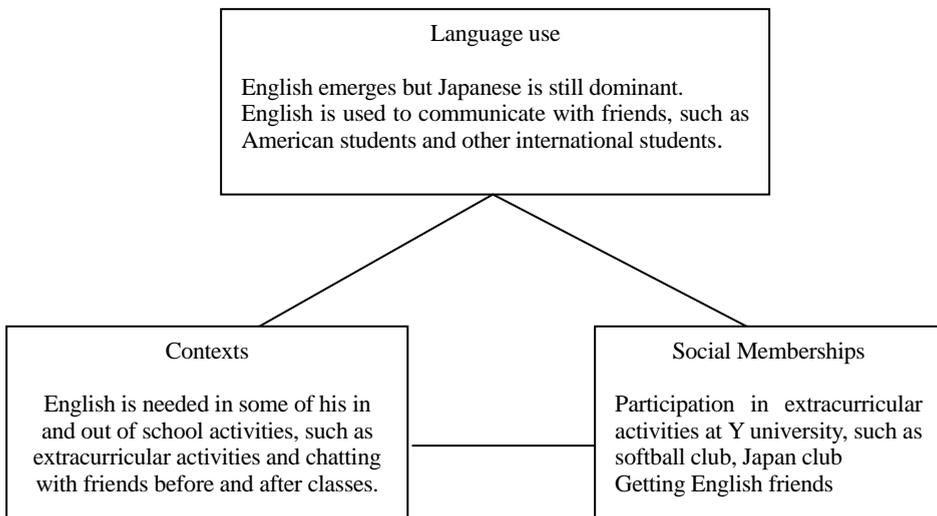
“symbolic resources”, such as good skills in sports and art, and tried to get into contexts where English was required to communicate (Norton, 2000, p. 7).

I have been playing pin pong in the basement often lately. I play doubles with whoever happens to be there. To me, sport is a medium of practicing or conversing in English. (Journal, March 24, 2003)

This Wednesday, I went to Recreation Services Office with Andy to sign up for the softball tournament that will be held on the first Wednesday after the Spring Break. Although I tried to talk to people into playing in my team, I could not get enough members to form a team. So I recruited members from the pool of free agent players. People from the office were very kind so I felt comfortable asking them questions. (Journal, March 27, 2003)

I joined an organization called Japan club this semester and did a language exchange with American students studying Japanese on a weekly basis. The language exchange was more enjoyable than expected and I even had a chance to participate in my partner’s class as an assistant. (Autobiography, May 10, 2003)

FIGURE 4
Takashi’s Identity Construction at a Later Stage



Like male ESL students in McKay and Wong’s (1996) study, he either tries to resist being positioned as an ESL student or finds a means of defining himself more than just an ESL student. In other words, he makes efforts to draw strength from his other identities,

such as a good athlete, to exercise agency from which he can derive satisfaction. Sports indeed provide him not only with various contexts in which he could practice English but also with chances to participate in extensive social or cultural activities in and out of school, both of which have a strong sense of contexts where English is mandatory. Figure 4 indicates how his identity was constructed at a later stage in a new environment. In fact, his getting more memberships in the mainstream could yield an arena where he could use English as well as lead him to use less Japanese. Thus, the ways in which he related to the social world had changed from being Japanese to becoming an insider of a new environment as he was getting more social and cultural memberships in the mainstream.

Overall, the findings imply that his being an outsider in the mainstream, being Japanese, yielded rather superficial conversation in which he was exposed to limited interactive resources and practices in English due to dominance of Japanese in his daily interaction. On the other hand, his changing identity, from being Japanese to becoming an insider of the mainstream, could facilitate his social interaction processes where he could experience diverse interactive resources and engage in various types of interactive practices in which he finally utilized the interactive resources he had been exposed to by using his own voice, claiming his right to speak.

VI. THE WAYS IN WHICH DIANA'S SOCIAL IDENTITY MEDIATES HER OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK

For the first few months at Y university, Diana was at the boundaries of the social network in the mainstream. French was dominant in Diana's daily interaction because she built a network of friendships with people who spoke French and had less contact with people who spoke English at her early stage in the mainstream.

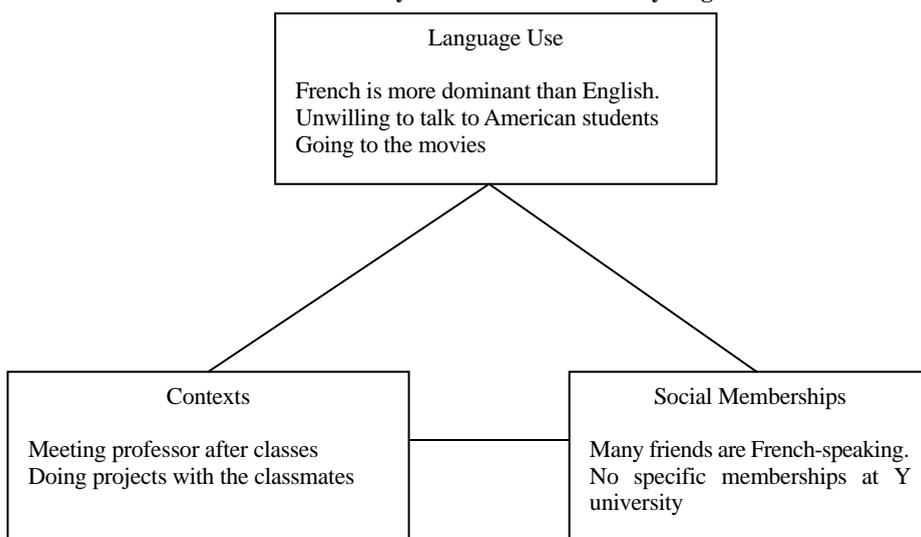
For my first few months here, I was mostly in contact with people from my country and people who spoke French. (Autobiography, May 30, 2002)

Most of my friends are international students and most of them are from French-speaking countries, such as France and African countries where French is spoken. (Journal, December 10, 2002)

At the beginning, I didn't know as many people. And I had more contact with Americans in my class and I lived with an American girl. I didn't speak a lot with them because there were differences in cultures and I wasn't comfortable with English. So I didn't speak with them. So I didn't speak as much English and I was close to people who spoke French. (Interview, March 27, 2003)

As indicated in figure 5, although she had contacts with people speaking English at an early stage, French was more dominant than English because the presence of her French speaking friends around her made her use more French than English and provided her with strong links to the students speaking French, which eventually functions to exclude her from the mainstream.

FIGURE 5
Diana's Identity Construction at an Early Stage



However, after a period of months, she was getting more social memberships at Y university and built a network of friends with American students as well as students who spoke English as a second language. On this account, the frequency of her using French decreased and she got more chances to speak English.

My contact with people from my country was decreasing. (Autobiography, November 30, 2003)

I think I speak English enough because most of my friends are from other countries. So the only way we can communicate is English. So when we go out and when we talk, we speak English. (Interview, February 25, 2003)

I worked at Y university hospital with Americans and I had learned some words and ways of talking through my colleagues. (Journal, May 15, 2003)

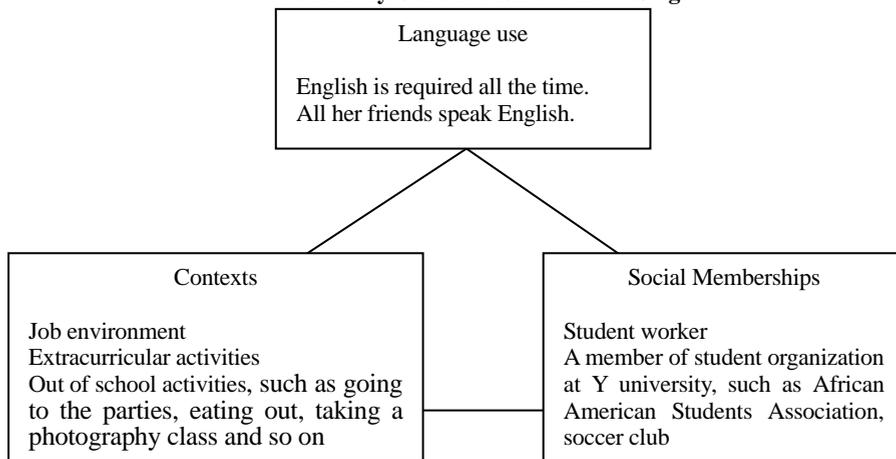
She was seated with some friends, a girl from Indonesia, her boyfriend, and a girl from Denmark. They talked about how they are going to spend the Spring break. (Fieldnotes, March 15, 2003)

In my work environment, I spoke to my colleagues about our job and our plans for the rest of the semester and our schedules for the next semester.
(Journal, April 7, 2003)

As illustrated in Diana's data, she was tied to being a fuller participant in the mainstream because her in-and-out-of school activities provided a sense of contexts in which English was must.

Figure 6 shows Diana's identity construction at a later stage. She had two jobs at Y university where English was a medium of communicating with other colleagues as well as bosses and she actively participated in extracurricular activities at Y university where she could extend friendships with American students as well as other international students.

FIGURE 6
Diana's Identity Construction at a Later Stage



Clearly, Diana had a strong sense of contexts where English was necessary, including in -and-out-of school activities at a later stage. Some scholars acknowledge that "one's identity and language use are closely related to social practices he/she participates in because to speak of someone's social identity is to speak, at the very least, of what attaches them in virtue of their membership at a category" (Antaki, Condor & Levine, 1996, p. 473). As illustrated in figure 6, her identity was constructed as an active participant in the mainstream in that her in-and-out-of school activities conveyed her inclusion in the dominant mainstream groups where she could use English and thus she was an insider to the mainstream.

In fact, her getting more memberships in the mainstream indeed facilitated her social contacts with other people who speak English.

During Thanksgivings, I was invited to my boss' family for dinner...We joked a lot and talked about what we think of men's and women's behaviors and we also had a debate with his brother about the concepts of good and bad and some other philosophical stuff. (Journal, February 27, 2003)

On Thursday, my friend invited me for dinner...We joked a lot and also talked about American politics and Christmas break plans. We had an interesting debate about to what extent someone's major can tell about the person's personality. (Journal, March 12, 2003)

On Tuesday evening, I went for dinner with few friends from Germany, England, Japan, France, Morocco, and Denmark. The girl from Germany wanted us to meet her boyfriend who came from England to visit her, so I talked a lot with him about his visit to the U.S. and his relationship with my friend. (Journal, April 17, 2003).

Her positioning, as a fuller participant in the mainstream, could offer easy access to social contacts with people in and out of school activities and extend her opportunities to engage in "communities of practice", such as social interactions with other people (Wenger, 1998). Most importantly, she considered these opportunities not only as chances to practice her English but also as an arena where she could learn something from other people. In sum, her positioning in the social world as a fuller participant in the mainstream accelerated her social interaction processes through which she could be exposed to various types of interactive resources.

VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Sociocultural theory of learning provided me with a set of theoretical frameworks through which the researcher could successfully investigate the relationship between ESL students' social identities and their opportunities to speak. In case of Yoko, her positioning, as an active participant in the mainstream, could provide her with ample chances to speak English with other people through which she could claim her right to speak, whereas Takashi's positioning, as a passive participant in the mainstream, limited his social contacts with other people. Thus, his daily interactions were confined to superficial ones that only provided limited interactive resources and practices. Diana's positioning, as a fuller participant in the mainstream, accelerated her social contacts with other people, through which she could be exposed to various interactive resources and practices.

As it has been discussed earlier, SLA research influenced by linguistic and psycholinguistic approaches with the focus on the individual only provide a narrow view

of SLA, a mentalistic perspective, because little attention is paid to social and contextual factors influencing individual functioning (Day, 2002; Ellis, 1994; Firth & Wagner, 1997). Learning a language is not about the individual's acquiring a language but about the individual's participating in social processes in which "he/she becomes a member of a certain community, communities in the language of this community, and acts according to its norms" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 155). That is, learning is not a simply complex task but a socio-cognitively complex task. Thus, I suggest that SLA researchers need to conduct more ethnographic research that focuses on activities and practices language learners engage in and situate language learners in their sociocultural context in order to illuminate that learning inevitably accompanies social practices (Day, 2002)

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APPENDIX A

The Themes of Participants' Autobiographies

The following is a direction for your autobiography. Please chronologically express anything related to your daily language learning experiences. Please take a look at the following direction before you start writing your autobiography.

1. Please discuss the ways in which you have learned English in the U.S. For instance, you can talk any kinds of stories related to your English language learning experiences.
2. Please discuss how often you speak in English with whom about what.

APPENDIX B

The Theme of Participants' Journals

The following is a direction you need to refer to when you keep a journal weekly. You can express anything happening in terms of your daily chances to speak English. Please take a look at the following direction and keep that in mind when keeping a journal.

1. Please state your daily chances to speak in English. For instance, you can talk about how often, with whom, about what, and under what circumstances you speak English.

APPENDIX C

Questions for Interview

1. When do you speak English?
2. With whom do you speak English?
3. How often do you speak English?

4. Do you frequently speak English?
5. If so, can you tell me why?
6. If not, can you tell me why?

Applicable levels: tertiary

Key words: ESL students, opportunities to speak, social identity

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