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Author

Hirst, Elizabeth

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# Diverse Voices in a Second Language Classroom: Burlesque, Parody and Mimicry

*Elizabeth Hirst*

*Griffith University, Queensland, Australia*

Competence has been theorised as the appropriation of voices that have audibility and status within specific social contexts. In this study, I employ this approach to examine how students in a second language classroom deploy linguistic and cultural resources to both resist and appropriate aspects of the teacher's voices. A key episode is analysed to show the nuances of students' ventriloquation of diverse voices (not normally associated with traditional classroom talk) to construct a complex social order and shifting strategic identities.

## Introduction

All classes are meeting places of a range of discursive practices, they are sites of negotiation and conflict, where social identities and relations of power are established (Luke & Freebody, 1997). This paper is premised on the assumption that Language other than English (LOTE) classes are key sites for the contestation and construction of identity, a significant issue that is entering public debate with the re-emergence of nationalism and rapid political transitions (Wertsch, 1995). Learning another language, or another set of discursive practices, inevitably involves issues of culture, identity and resistance.

Individuals learn to become members of cultures by participating in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning is the process of appropriating the cultural resources or voices of these communities (Wertsch, 1991); it is a semiotic apprenticeship (Gee, 1992; Wells, 1999). Through participation as apprentices, students appropriate voices that are privileged by particular discursive communities, moving from legitimate peripheral participation to fully competent membership, where competence is theorised as the mastery of voices that are privileged in specific social contexts. The heterogeneity of voices in the classroom is considered an essential platform for dialogical interanimation (Ballenger, 1997; Gutierrez *et al.*, 1995; Haworth, 1999). Students' learning outcomes are enhanced when their 'authentic community voices are 'honoured', when their local knowledge is not displaced.

This analysis represents a study of mediated action, individuals operating with mediational means (Wertsch, 1991), or voices, as they participate in communities of practice, in an Indonesian LOTE classroom in a provincial town in Northern Australia. Initially, I address second language programmes from the policy, institutional and community perspectives. Then, following a brief description of the research context and the analytical tools that I bring to the data, I move to a micro analysis of classroom talk and explore how participants

ventriloquate diverse voices as they both appropriate and resist aspects of the teacher's voice as they constitute their cultural identities.

### **LOTE: Political, economic and social context**

In the last decade in Australia LOTE programmes have been introduced as part of the curriculum in the middle and upper years of primary schooling. The political and economic imperative to implement these programmes is evidenced by the Australian language policies and initiatives over the last decade,<sup>1</sup> indeed few curriculum areas have been afforded so much policy attention (Lo Bianco, 1998). Intellectual, attitudinal and economic benefits are foreshadowed by these policies (Braddy, 1991; Dawkins, 1991).

The economic imperative was nowhere more obvious than in the initiatives to prioritise and expand the teaching of Asian languages (COAG, 1994). Building on the positive correlation between linguistic skills and export growth (Stanley *et al.*, 1990), these initiatives not only sought to facilitate this growth but also address 'the importance of minimizing resistance to export growth due to linguistic, cultural and attitudinal resistance to Asia' (MacKerras, 1995).

Notwithstanding the cogency of these policies and initiatives the feasibility of their ambitious goals has been questioned (MacKerras, 1995), and translating them into desired outcomes has been problematic. Indeed, the success of policies inevitably involves a complex of ideological, funding, planning, administrative and interest-based factors, and additionally, and most critically, Lo Bianco (1998: 12) argues, '[it] depends upon something particular to language and its intersection with the wider society's culture'. In many schools in Queensland LOTE has found itself in a marginal space in the school curriculum through challenges to its legitimacy from school administrators, classroom teachers, parents and students (Djite, 1994; Rix, 1999). Key concerns in the implementation of LOTE programmes and which impact directly on the practice of LOTE teachers include teacher supply, itinerancy, non-contact time practices and community attitudes.

LOTE teachers' working conditions seriously mitigate against the legitimacy and status of the programme, the teacher and the successful implementation and sustainability of LOTE policies (National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS), 1998). The itinerant nature of primary LOTE teachers' work and school management practices of timetabling LOTE to provide non-contact time (NCT) for classroom teachers can impair the inclusion or support of both the teacher and the LOTE in the school community (Miller, 1997; Roulston, 1998). This marginal position has in many cases been further intensified by contracting overseas born and trained teachers, native speakers of the LOTE, to counter the projected and current shortfall of LOTE teachers both in terms of numbers (Djite, 1994) and proficiency (MacKerras, 1995). These teachers, Kamler *et al.* (1998) maintain, neither count, numerically, culturally or professionally, nor receive systemic support. This is of particular moment, 'if we acknowledge that parochial attitudes and covert racism are a part of the experience of overseas born teachers' (Kamler *et al.*, 1998: 509).

These institutional conditions, established wittingly or unwittingly, act to convey to students and teachers alike the 'worth' given to LOTE, and inevitably impact not only on teaching and learning (Miller, 1997: 83), but also on manage-

ment of student behaviour (Kingdon, 1995). These material conditions also impact on the lives of LOTE teachers, evidenced by the high attrition rate of LOTE teachers, considerably higher than those in nearly all other key learning areas (Australian Language and Literacy Council National – Board of Employment Education and Training, 1996; Rix, 1999).

The dilemmas between, on the one hand, policy initiatives which mandate for the increase and expansion of LOTE teaching, particularly Asian languages, in order to underpin Australia's economic future through the skilling of future workers with desirable linguistic competencies and attitudes, and on the other hand the institutional issues which include shortfall in teachers, itinerancy and NCT, can be located within a broader framework of wider community attitudes. Historically, Lo Bianco (1998: 8) argues: 'Australian linguistic culture made a virtue of steadfast monolingualism [ . . . ] these broad patterns of background civilization have an impact on the implementability of ambitious plans for languages, for these plans can never be divorced from the society which gives them life'. The re-emergence of nationalism in Australian political landscape represented by the One Nation Party, which 'sanctions' racialised discursive practices (Clyne, 1998), although by no means representative of the entire community, does have particular relevance for this study, located in an electorate, whose One Nation candidate gained 57% of the primary vote (Queensland Electoral Commission, 1998).

## **Research Context**

This analysis forms part of a larger investigation at a primary school, which serves students from low to medium socio-economic backgrounds across a wide geographical area of outer suburbs. Data were collected using video<sup>2</sup> and audio tapes, observational notes and interviews over a nine-month period from a Year 7 LOTE (Indonesian) class, comprising 23 students (11 to 13 years of age): 12 boys and 11 girls. Four of the students are of Aboriginal background, two boys and two girls; one boy is of Asian descent. The students have been learning Indonesian since Year 5, scheduled in three half-hour lessons each week. The itinerant LOTE teacher services two schools and is employed as part of a cooperative agreement between an Indonesian provincial administration and the Queensland State Government. His first language is a regional Indonesian language and his second language is Bahasa Indonesia. He learned English and trained as a secondary English language teacher in Indonesia. This study was conducted from the beginning of his second year in Australia and his first year of appointment as a LOTE teacher. Prior to this he was employed as an assistant at two high schools in the metropolitan area. Before his current appointment he had no experience of primary teaching and had neither planned nor taught independently in Australia. The school staff was not aware of his lack of experience.

## **Analytical Framework**

A sociocultural approach to development, informed by the cultural psychology of Vygotsky, is premised on the assumption that the constructs of mind and identity cannot be understood independently of the cultural practices and material conditions in which humans participate. The learner is constituted within

cultural, historical and social relationships; it is both the changing nature of these relationships and patterns of participation that characterise development. Therefore accounts of learning, 'are accounts of changing patterns of engagement in collective activities and social practices, rather than descriptions of progressive developmental changes that occur within the individual' (Renshaw, 1998: 3).

Development is a creative process during which individuals appropriate and remediate cultural tools in social practices. The creative and transformative dimension of this process presumes the active role of the agent. However, relationships between the agent and the cultural tool are not always benign and as Wertsch (1998) argues, they may be characterised by resistance or rejection, which may indeed be the accepted practices in some social contexts. These practices do not preclude a relationship between the agent and the cultural tool: 'resistance and rejection still constitutes a relationship between agent and mediational means (a specific form of alterity), they still give rise to mediated action, and they still may have a major impact on the development of the agent' (Wertsch, 1998: 144).

### Analytical tools

The tools I bring to this study allow for multiple and interrelated levels of analysis, enabling close scrutiny of the micro-interactive encounters and the polyphonic nature of dialogue whilst simultaneously revealing these encounters as actions that are both mediated by and mediate the social, historical and cultural context (Wertsch, 1995). I start from the assumption that utterances are always characterised by the dialogicality of voices (Bakhtin, 1981), and a systemic analysis of spoken utterance in the classroom can reveal much about the role of language in development. An utterance is multivoiced; it becomes internally dialogical when another's words are incorporated. 'Voicing foregrounds *whose* perspectives are being represented and thereby places arguments within a social context' (Knoeller, 1998: 18). Interactions, the interanimation of voices, are critical sites for the social construction of reality (Eggin & Slade, 1997; Fairclough, 1995; Halliday, 1978). A critical focus on the micro-semiotic dynamics of interactions reveals how both interpersonal and ideational meanings are negotiated as interactants draw on voices to construct, contest, resist and maintain identities and sociocultural contexts. In these interactions voices are orchestrated in the classroom in particular ways, in scripts and counterscripts (Gutierrez *et al.*, 1995). Examining these processes, the interanimation of voices, or mediational means, the continuous processes of transformation and creativity that interactants are engaged in, necessarily involves an analysis of the social spaces, spaces of negotiation and contestation, spaces where power is played out and where values and ideologies are reconstituted linguistically. These tools also allow for an exploration of the personal, interpersonal and community planes (Rogoff & Radziszewska, 1995) and can offer different insights, allowing the researcher to unravel the complexities of the contexts whilst capturing the interrelationships between them.

### A serious word about humour: parody and teasing

The data I will present are characterised by the pervasive use of humorous devices such as teasing, ironic remarks and parody. Before moving to the data,

consider Rampton's question: 'Does the difference between resistance and messing about just boil down to the analyst's ideological perspective?' (Rampton, 1996: 166). The casual conversations in the counterscripts that occur between students in the LOTE classroom may appear to be idle chatter of little significance, a way of killing time; but analysis suggests that this talk does serious social work. The use of humorous devices is not just a means of 'messing about' or having some fun but is a tool in constructing both solidarity and marginality. Interactants are concerned with the evaluation and regulation of the group's behaviour, which is achieved by targeting marginal members and censoring deviance from behavioural norms (Eggs & Slade, 1997; Rampton, 1996). The work of constructing, challenging, appropriating, investing in and resisting cultural identities achieved is overlaid with humour, particularly parody of the Indonesian voice. Mimicry, or repetition of teacher voice, is considered to be one mechanism that plays a role in scaffolding instruction in a second language, (DiCamilla & Anton, 1997) working to establish and maintain intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1974; 1979). Parody, however, both disguises and enables the interactants to do serious identity work by providing a resource for exercising discursive power. Humour functions to render invisible to interactants that what is being constantly negotiated and contested in their talk is power (Eggs & Slade, 1997: 166).

## The Study

### Setting up the scripts

The objective of the lesson from which excerpts are presented is for students to produce an Indonesian text based on the book *Keluarga Saya* (My Family). Students are expected to appropriate the genre of the book and substitute the book's circumstantial content with content derived from vocabulary used in previous lessons. The teacher's script is revealed in the way he selects and presents activities to the students, in the voices that he ventriloquates and the participation patterns he anticipates so that students will appropriate these voices.

During his presentation the teacher rarely deviates from his monologue, or provides a 'legitimate' space for students' voices as they respond to a familiar text. He ventriloquates an authoritative voice, an institutional teacher's voice, with which the students are not invited to interanimate. This voice is part of his repertoire as a classroom teacher, a voice he has appropriated through his own experiences of participation as teacher and student, and is characteristic of classrooms in South East Asia (Martin, 1999: 41). It is the script with which he is familiar (Gutierrez *et al.*, 1995). The subject positions offered to learners are as passive recipients of knowledge.

Some students invest in and take up the identity on offer, positioning themselves as the kind of student that the authoritative and monologic text interpellates. However, other students do attempt to challenge and resist this voice, but they cannot achieve this in dialogic interanimation; the voice the teacher ventriloquates does not invite or allow interanimation. The voice itself is resistant to interanimation (Bakhtin, 1981). This discourse allows no interanimation with other genres, it does not act as a generator of meaning but, 'demands our unconditional allegiance . . . it allows no play at its borders, no gradual and flexi-

ble transitions, no spontaneously creative stylising variants on it' (Wertsch, 1991: 78). The means that students use then are to talk over the teacher, challenging the legitimacy of the authoritative voice, denying it a privileged place in their classroom and diminishing its audibility. They build a counterscript derived from the teacher script and text.

In the following analysis I address the relationship between the agent and the cultural tools deployed: how are individuals appropriating, transforming and creating new meanings? If, as I indicated earlier, learning is about participating, appropriating and reconstituting discourse practices (Gee *et al.*, 1996; Hicks, 1996), learning in the Indonesian classroom could then be envisaged as the appropriation of particular discourse practices, specifically appropriating the voice of an Indonesian speaker and of Indonesian textual voices. My focus is on the tension between these means and the agents – what are students learning, how is their development being shaped?

### Teasing tools

|     |    |                                      |    |                                       |
|-----|----|--------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|
| 84  | PA | ... ((pointing to text, the          |    |                                       |
| 85  |    | word <i>adik</i> , is on the page))  | A  | Adick it starts with a:dick           |
| 86  |    | ((Speaks to a student at the         | C  | Ah: dick                              |
| 87  |    | front of the classroom)) (7)         | M  | Amelia said a <u>dick</u>             |
| 88  |    |                                      | A  | Is that how <u>you</u> say it?        |
| 89  |    |                                      | M  | Well <u>that's</u> how it's said, ah: |
| 90  |    |                                      |    | dick                                  |
| 91  |    |                                      | A  | I say ah]                             |
| 92  |    |                                      | C  | [(indis) you Mike ((shows             |
| 93  |    |                                      |    | Mike a piece of paper))               |
| 94  |    |                                      | M  | What are these for?                   |
| 95  |    | The next one, you can (...)          |    | ((grabbing the paper))                |
| 96  | PA | draw your mother (Pause 5)           | C  | Your tool                             |
| 97  |    |                                      | M  | What's this ((pointing to the         |
| 98  |    |                                      |    | paper))                               |
| 99  |    | She likes: err wearing a ah;         | C  | It's yours dildo                      |
| 100 |    | big hat (... ) you can change a      | M  | Hehehe you're an idiot                |
| 101 |    | big hat with a (... ) small hat,     |    | ((looks at other students)            |
| 102 |    | you can change the: the              | C  | Why (... ) <u>why?</u>                |
| 103 |    | glasses for example with             | M  | (indis) ((whispers to Amelia))        |
| 104 |    | anything you like (... ) you         | C  | What's the matter with that,          |
| 105 |    | draw and describe (pause 4)          |    | dildo?                                |
| 106 |    | OK? (... )This is my father.         | M  | You're an idiot, hey? Hahaha          |
| 107 |    | He is very <u>strong</u> you can     |    | (indis) muscley mum, your             |
| 108 |    | change this character or very        |    | girl isn't it? your man isn't         |
| 109 |    | thin or very tall (3) <i>Seperti</i> |    | it?                                   |
| 110 |    | King Kong, like King Kong            | C  | ((Nods))                              |
| 111 |    | (pause 4) ((looks around class       | M  | King Come                             |
| 112 |    | - many students talking))            | C  | [[hahaha                              |
| 113 |    |                                      | M  | [[Well that's his name King           |
| 114 |    |                                      |    | Come                                  |
| 115 | Je | My dad's not =                       | PP | [[((students calling out))            |
| 116 | PA | ((leans forward to hear              | C  | [[Orange Juice                        |
| 117 |    | Jessie)) = Sorry                     |    |                                       |
| 118 | Je | But my Dad is not an orang           |    |                                       |
| 119 |    | utan                                 |    |                                       |

|     |    |                                  |   |                                  |
|-----|----|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 120 | PA | Just a book just a storybook     | M | Yes he is (. . .) no your dad is |
| 121 |    | ((waggles book)) (. . .) this is |   | ah: (. . .) (pause 4)            |
| 122 |    | a storybook not about            |   | [Jessie, Jessie,                 |
| 123 |    | yourself. It's just a            |   | your Dad's a a a                 |
| 124 |    | storybook, OK?                   | C | [Give me a red pen ((to          |
| 125 |    |                                  |   | Amelia))                         |
| 126 | Je | ((nods))                         |   |                                  |
| 127 | PA | ((turns and writes on board))    |   |                                  |
| 128 |    | Makes a storybook . . .          |   |                                  |

This episode reveals an example of teasing that is realised through the parodic use of a common Indonesian word used to describe family relations. The parody involves revoicing a textual voice '*adik*' (younger sibling). Units on the family are traditionally introduced in the beginning stages of learning a second language and this word is familiar to these students. The Indonesian pronunciation has a phonemic pattern similar to the English words 'a dick', but in contrast to the final plosive in English which is aspirated, it is completed with a glottal stop. It is often a focus of students' attention and humour. The humour is created through incongruity (Eggins & Slade, 1997); the students hear a word that is an anti-word, a taboo word in classroom discourse. It is common for students to say this word quite loudly in Indonesian classes, claiming, if challenged, that the non-serious meaning was not intended, so they cannot be held accountable for using taboo language.

Thus, when Amelia uses this word (Ln 85), reads it aloud, repeats it, changing her initial pronunciation creating a two-syllable word by elongating the first vowel, it is already saturated in 'dialogic overtones' (Bakhtin, 1986: 102). She revoices a word that can no longer be used in a neutral way. For the students who have experienced and shared the context this word has become strongly associated with a particular sociocultural voice (Wertsch, 1991); it is not a voice that belongs to nobody. Whenever the utterance of another is revoiced it is inevitably populated by the social context and the speaker's intentions. What is audible to the students and to me, a teacher of Indonesian, is simultaneously the collective voice of students' interpretations, the use of taboo anti-language and the voice of the speaker, Amelia. This former voice is so audible that it is not possible for Amelia to use this word without other students recognising its history. This opening move of Amelia's not only defines the propositional content of the succeeding counterscript but also establishes the humorous genre.

A turn becomes internally dialogical when it is oppositional; when the purposes are anomalous, revoicing is vari-directional. Uni-directional utterances imply that the speaker is aligned with the intentions of the utterance; by contrast vari-directional suggests that the speaker's intentions range from outright questioning to more subtle forms of resistance (Knoeller, 1998). The intention of the textual word that Amelia has appropriated is to describe a family member. This is not her intention. I suggest that it is the pragmatic aspect of the utterance that Amelia is drawing on; she recalls the history of relationships and parody that saturate this word and offers it up for play, to have some fun and to recreate past relationships.

However, responses not only display the recipient's understanding, they also retrospectively affect the first speaker's own interpretation of the significance of what they have said. In Mike's response (Ln 87) he instigates the second part of



the teasing sequence, shaping Amelia's utterance as taboo language: 'recipient's contribution to meaning may be particularly important in utterances that have a high symbolic loading' (Rampton, 1996: 169). The subsequent teasing sequence (Ln 87) is not a reformulation of intent (Drew, 1987) but rather socially sanctions Amelia's use of this word. Mike uses reported speech, interpersonal revoicing, to parody Amelia's utterance. In his utterance we can hear two voices; as he imitates her voice, emphasising her pronunciation, he simultaneously comments on it. This is a dialogic or multivoiced phenomenon; teasing is realised through the irony or sarcasm that emerges due to the simultaneous presence of both the transmitting and transmitted voice.

In this parodic revoicing Mike chooses to comment on Amelia's revoicing of this utterance, shaping its meaning and attempting to regulate Amelia's behaviour by positioning her as a transgressor of classroom rules. He announces his accusation to a wider audience than his immediate peer group, including the video camera, inviting other participants to become involved as he names Amelia as the offender, making a judgement of her social behaviour in this context and inferring that she has not conformed to the social norms of the classroom. Her offence is using what is regarded as inappropriate language in the classroom, slang talk about genitalia – 'a dick'. In this way Mike constructs a position of authority, policing classroom talk, as he sanctions Amelia's verbal behaviour (Eggs & Slade, 1997).

This sanctioning is realised both grammatically and lexically. Choosing a declarative statement Mike names Amelia as the agent of the transgression, making apparent, to anyone who will listen, who the offender is. In this accusation not only is the utterance revoiced but phonemically transformed (as two separate words) into the 'inappropriate language' (Ln 87). He is neither attempting to pronounce the Indonesian word, nor appropriate its 'serious' meaning, but is appropriating the word to do some interpersonal work.

Positions have been set up. Identity work is under way. By choosing a declarative mood Mike adopts an active initiatory role in the interaction and presents an attitudinal opinion (Eggs & Slade, 1997: 85). By taking up this authoritative position he also sets up a role which requires something of the listener: '... it is an exchange in which giving implies receiving and demanding implies giving a response' (Halliday, 1994: 68). However, Amelia neither confronts nor challenges Mike's declarative. She blocks his positioning by turning and responding to Chloe's interpersonal voicing (Ln 86) of her own (Amelia's) utterance. She queries the pronunciation (Ln 88) and strategically identifies herself now, not as the 'offender' but as an 'inquirer', a serious student, interested in eliciting information about pronunciation. Her attempt to retrieve the 'serious' intent of the ideational content of her original utterance and her use of the interrogative invites a response; it also serves to block Mike's previous utterance and his judgement of her behaviour. She is attempting to use this cultural tool to change the authority structure of the interaction (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993).

The word has a life of its own and although Amelia attempts to regain the moral high ground, further teasing sequences and sustaining moves creatively embellish the propositional content of the counterscript. What then was the intention of Amelia's utterance? What meaning was being made? Meaning can only come into existence when two or more voices come into contact (Bakhtin,

1986: 99). Was she just 'messaging about', indulging in the experience of being able to use taboo language and not be accountable? Considering her utterance as performing serious social work does not just represent the ideological perspective of the researcher.

Drawing on another social discourse, Mike now claims authority of a different sort (Ln 89). He again employs linguistic resources to re-constitute his power in these interactions, but he has had to accede to Amelia's interpretation of the ideational content, the field. His pronunciation of *adik* is now a revoicing of Amelia's textual revoicing, with an elongated vowel at the beginning of the word replacing the indefinite article 'a'. He maintains, 'Well, that's how it's said', giving himself legitimacy as he aligns himself with the voice of the expert, of convention, a community voice. Again, through his declarative statement, he constitutes his power in these interactions.

However, the incongruity of the situation has not escaped Chloe. It seems that Mike's strategic shift in identity as he attempts to constitute himself in a powerful position, from the accuser to the expert and the roles he has shaped for Amelia as the transgressor and then the novice, are undermined as Chloe makes a sustaining move to maintain both the propositional content and the humorous nature of the counterscript and to challenge the subject position that Mike has taken up. She appropriates the 'non-serious' meaning of the word, the contextual voice and embellishes it, though her target is Mike. She plays with the meaning, drawing a picture of a stick man, with a large penis, showing it to Mike, identifying the penis as his (Ln 96). She uses slang words to relexicalise the original utterance, 'tool' and 'dildo'. The penis is represented as an object of fun, seriously undermining male power. Chloe presents a social reality in which the penis is an object of mirth; she is able to do this by connecting with the prior interactions. She sustains the counterscript as she reformulates the revoiced utterance. Through this interpersonal revoicing, she appropriates the 'non-serious' meaning of the word and re-names it, clearly moving out of the 'incongruous' domain of sliding signifiers, to initiate another humorous sequence which undermines Mike's power by representing him (pictorially) as a figure of fun.

Amelia had drawn on the history of this word as she offered it up for play and simultaneously initiated a humorous counterscript. Chloe appropriated it, re-named it and in doing so strategically invested in an identity that has a temporary power base. Mike laughs uncertainly, looking around, and then attempts to regain a position of power, diminishing Chloe by name-calling, a strategy to assert dominance. Boys assert their dominance not only through the use of sexist terms but through their verbal dominance: 'the construction and assertion of gender identities [is] one of the most pervasive social processes of the children's cultures' (Troyna & Hatcher, 1992: 54). So, Mike now draws on the powerful discourses of masculinity to reassert his power. These powerful discourses are available not only to boys, though most commonly used by them. Chloe's dilemma is revealed in a later part of this transcript: 'd' ya know, if I was an older boy I'd be a . . . um . . . drag queen'. Lacan (1997: 287), describing the phallus as the 'privileged signifier', suggests that authority can only be effectively challenged from a position of authority, a position that can trap girls within the very phallic economy they hope to subvert (Mowery, 1993). Judith Butler (1990) points to the subversive potential of drag, the 'inverted appellation' which is a parody of a

naturalising strategy and allows for both the appropriation and resistance of subject positions.

The intersection of students' and teacher talk here is represented by the students appropriating a word from the text. They have parodied an Indonesian textual voice to do some interpersonal work, identity work. By 'renting' (Holquist, 1997) an interpretation of the textual voice, borrowing the phonemic patterning, they have played with it, bent it to serve their own purposes. This is not new, this word has a history of being used in this way: 'Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life' (Bakhtin, 1981:293). This makes it difficult to define turns in conversations as discrete units involving a change in speaker because speakers routinely appropriate other's words and ideas. Within this dialogical framework, speakers revoice not only the words of others but also who uttered them and to what effect, this is the pragmatic aspect of interaction. Knoeller (1998) claims that speakers internalise, beyond the words of others, such pragmatic 'interrelationships'; subsequent utterances reface these relationships and contain 'vestiges of interrelationships' between speakers.

In his appropriation of these mediational means Mike calls on his peers to witness both the subject position he interpellates for Amelia, as transgressor, and the powerful one he constructs for himself, as a monitor of classroom behaviour. Amelia retrieves and reinvests in an identity by taking up the available repertoire of what Laws and Davies (2000) describe as the 'good school student'. Mike makes a further attempt to establish his authority but now on Amelia's terms. Chloe briefly undermines his power and at this point she moves out of the protection the sliding signifier provided.

In the above analysis I have provided a reading of the data that demonstrates ways in which students draw on Indonesian linguistic resources to both build a counterscript and engage in interpersonal work. However, students are also revealing their stance towards the ideational or propositional content of their texts:

Whatever we have to say about the world, we can also tell others, in the same utterance, to what extent we believe what we say is likely, desirable, important, permissible, surprising, serious, or comprehensible. In making these evaluations of propositions and proposals, we also orient our text in the larger world of available social viewpoints on our topic, and we further define our identities as meaning-makers with particular values as well as beliefs. (Lemke, 1998: 1)

A lexical analysis of the counterscript reveals that students' utterances not only remain in the register of 'smutty talk' but also draw their content from the Indonesian teacher's voice or textual voice; for example: *adik* – a dick, dildo, tool; *King Kong* – King come; *Orang*<sup>4</sup> – orange juice. The effect is that it locates Indonesian language in a humorous register, lowering its status as a serious language. In these instances, students are generally not taking up the voice of the Indonesian speaker to engage with an interlocutor whose voice is heard in its fullness but rather as a form of parody. The identity work afforded by these mediational means provides students with ways of constituting their 'in-groupness' through shared access to and participation in this activity.

This analysis draws attention to the students' appropriation of aspects of the Indonesian speaker's voice in their construction of a counterscript. The counter script provides a space to evaluate, mock, marginalise the official script and to jostle for power. In the constitution of the counterscript students draw on discursive resources readily available to them, for example racist discourses which have again emerged as powerful narratives in Queensland in these new times of uncertainty and change (Saunders & McConnel, 2000). Drawing on these familiar discourses students parody textual and teacher voice transforming them into objects of ridicule, or 'mock' language which, Ronkin and Karn (1999) argue, covertly depends on speakers' and hearers' shared access to racist stereotypes regarding the alleged inferiority of the language and culture of the non-English speaker and their broader community.

'Mock language', established through mimicry and parody, can reveal the ways participants orient themselves to the ideational content of their utterances. Hill (1993: 166) maintains that although attention to linguistic racism in the published literature usually considers more explicit verbal and non-verbal strategies, the goal of reducing groups of people to a subordinate state is achieved, she says, 'through the subtle work of parodic voice deeply embedded in usage and disguised, to some degree as innocent accommodation to another language'.

The type of usage to which the borrowing of 'adik' belongs can be categorised as a series of adaptations of Indonesian language expressions to the registers of burlesque, irony or parody. This usage goes beyond the Anglicisation of borrowed material. It does not just suggest a situation of relatively little access to speakers of the source language, but an active distancing from Indonesian speakers. The distorted usage of the language can be read as an aspect of the construction of the community's racial practices that produce and reproduce the alien otherness of Indonesian speaking people. Racism works to manipulate and maintain the power of the in-group (Teo, 2000), and by covertly 'inferiorising' the language and culture of an 'outgroup', mock Indonesian users 'elevate' their 'in-groupness', thereby reproducing racism in everyday life (Ronkin & Karn, 1999: 361). I suggest that students are using Indonesian in the classroom in a limited, specified kind of a way that both reflects and reconstitutes some of the attitudes of the broader community.

The claim that these are racist practices may seem excessive; arguably this discursive work could be dependent on the students' notion that this is an 'incompetent' teacher, unable to credibly take up the teacher script. In the larger study from which this data are drawn there are many more obvious racist incidents. Nevertheless, I argue that these practices are also evident in this data. Teacher competence is not an individual attribute, it is a mediated action, and thus discursively constructed. The lack of systemic support for LOTE teachers born and trained overseas makes them invisible, 'they don't count' (Kamler *et al.*, 1998). This invisibility denies the diversity of their experiences and needs, and any difficulties are often read as individual failures. In many cases they are institutionally 'set up' to be incompetent, which is tantamount to institutional racism (Troyna & Rizvi, 1997). It buys into a racist ideology, which blames the victim for their disadvantage (Teo, 2000); an ideology that has strong resonance with current extreme right wing views (Cope *et al.*, 1998), and those expressed by our

political leaders. These ideologies are continuously put to work and tested in the social practices of the classroom, '[they] gain their purchase because they are enacted and affirmed by everyday social behaviour, because they 'work'' (Troyna & Hatcher, 1992: 47).

### Deride and rule

The LOTE teacher concludes the lesson five minutes before the scheduled time. On her return the classroom teacher stands in the doorway looking perplexed. Students turn their heads to look at her. They are very quiet now. She looks pointedly at the classroom clock, inquiring about Pak Asheed's absence, then indicates that she will speak to him again about his timekeeping practices. Although Mike had not brought the drawing to the attention of the teacher during the LOTE lesson, he chooses to do so now, taking the 'offensive' picture to the classroom teacher.

- 129 CT ((looking at a drawing that Chloe has made)). That's  
 130 totally inappropriate, completely and utterly inappropriate,  
 131 if I have one more problem in Indonesian, *one more*  
 132 problem, I am going to contact your parents I've had it  
 133 with this situation . . . (indistinct)  
 134 M Hehehe ((giggling and laughing at Chloe))  
 135 CT Oh its so: funny isn't it ((walks away looking at the  
 136 'book', then stops and turns)) Why have you even got this  
 137 made?  
 138 W we have to[ make a book  
 139 M [a book  
 140 CT What for?  
 141 W Indonesian  
 142 CT And *where* did the paper come from?  
 143 W Pak Asheed  
 144 M [Pak Asheed  
 145 PP [Pak Asheed

Through his action Mike invokes the cultural authority of the classroom teacher to change the power relations (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). Though the intention of this action may have been to earn Chloe a reprimand, much more than this is achieved. Assuming Mike has overheard the comments about Pak Asheed's timekeeping, it seems plausible that Mark is not only acting in a way that sanctions Chloe's assault on his masculinity, but also working to gain solidarity with the classroom teacher by revealing the activity that transpired during the LOTE lesson. The classroom teacher neither targets Chloe nor her behaviour in the criticism of this drawing, but the drawing itself. One of the means by which we express interpersonal relationships is through the use of semantic appraisal resources (Eggs & Slade, 1997). The negative social judgement of this drawing is achieved by repeating and amplifying a negative evaluation (Ln 130). The theme of the classroom teacher's first utterance, 'that' (Ln 129) refers to the drawing, is transformed into 'a problem' (Ln 131) and the problem has become the classroom teacher's, 'if I have one more problem'. She now expresses her negative emotional state 'I've had it with this situation' (Ln 132/133). Her negative social judgement is also apparent when she questions the legitimacy of the activity itself 'why have you even got this made' (Ln 136/137).

Her threat to 'contact your parents' (Ln 132) implies some form of solidarity with the parents, who can be expected to support her with 'her problem', which it appears is the Indonesian lesson. Her final attack on the legitimacy of the Indonesian lesson comes when she asks about the source of the paper (Ln 142). The paper used is a high quality white bond paper, usually reserved for final or 'good copies' of students' work, and not 'wasted' on drafts. It is a valued commodity, stored on a high shelf in the classroom. When the classroom teacher asks, 'and *where* did the paper come from', it is useful to bear in mind that the purpose of interrogatives is to probe for a missing element of clause structure. In her question the teacher places particular emphasis on the interrogative, 'where', which implies the anticipated answering clause, will be a place. However, students would be unlikely to know the place the paper came from unless it was from the computer shelf in their classroom. Students quickly move to absolve themselves of guilt, they did not use the classroom teacher's valuable bond paper, and many students, not just Mike and Will, answer, almost in unison, 'Pak Asheed'.

In these interactions the classroom teacher not only reconstitutes her power as one who can both interrogate and evaluate students, but also assumes the stance of judge on the activities of the LOTE teacher. Her comments on Pak Asheed's time keeping, and her judgement of the activity also reveals the ease with which she takes up a position to publicly sanction a fellow teacher, and in so doing constructs him as incompetent.

## Summary

In my analysis of teasing tools I argue that students deny the LOTE teacher a legitimate pedagogical space and construct a counterscript, sustained by the use of specific mediational means, Indonesian linguistic resources. Through these practices they marginalise both the Indonesian LOTE teacher and the Indonesian language. They create solidarity in their counterscript by not granting the LOTE teacher a privileged place: however within this counterscript, this 'community of practice', students are engaged in identity work and the concomitant negotiation of power relations. When the classroom teacher re-enters, students can no longer take cover beneath the blanket of solidarity that they have constructed in their counterscript to do this identity work. The cultural authority of this teacher's script is more powerful, is privileged over their counterscript, and the social space of the class is reconstituted. Mike quickly and strategically turns this transition to his advantage, calling on the teacher's cultural authority to target Chloe and undo her temporary position of power by sanctioning her behaviour. But the teacher does much more than this, she leads the fray in targeting marginal members, and the LOTE teacher is caught in her net. She questions not only his competency but also the legitimacy of the activity and the use of scarce resources. The facility with which she accesses and draws on the privileged cultural repertoire of the teacher quickly re-establishes her position of power, revealing the marginal position of LOTE in the school curriculum. In this way she nullifies the constructed protection under which the students could strategically take up identities of resistance. The discourses, upon which they drew to express this resistance, are discourses with which they are familiar, discourses of their community, discourses that work to subordinate the other.

## Conclusion

To summarise, mediated action describes the irreducible tensions between agent and mediational means. Mediational means, in this instance the word '*adik*', have certain 'affordances' – without these affordances it would not be possible to carry out the identity work that these students are engaged in. It is not just the word, or the mediational means, but the phonemic patterning of the word and its history that has done some of the work in this mediated action (Wertsch, 1998). When we ask who carried out this identity work we cannot say that it was just Amelia, Mike or Chloe but all these students using this mediational means in a particular social context. The cultural tool or mediational means cannot be thought of as determining the action; it has an impact only when an agent uses it (Wertsch, 1998:31). The social context makes some tools available and others not, for example when the classroom teacher is taking a lesson, appropriating and speaking out loud the words '*a dick*' would not be a linguistic choice students would be likely to make. They would not be in a position to claim that they were using the 'serious' interpretation in a lesson where Indonesian is not spoken. In this discussion the student as agent is highlighted as well as the social context and the cultural tool.

Although one could assume that this data appears to be documenting students' resistance to the LOTE teacher, the micro-interactional analysis of the data presents a much more complex picture. Traditional notion of resistance underpinned by Marxist ethnographies (Dubberley, 1993; Willis, 1977) do not really capture these complexities. Although students are clearly probing at the limits of authority, there are strategic alignments and shifts in identities; individual action cannot be described just as a function of membership of various categories and resistance an expression of inequitable power relations and life trajectories. But who does have power in this LOTE classroom? Wodak (1996: 2) argues that those who possess linguistic as well as institutional power invariably prevail. In this classroom the teacher is apparently invested with institutional power, but it is severely undermined by institutional practices. He has Indonesian linguistic knowledge but has not yet mastered the teacher script in this social context, the cultural repertoire for being a teacher. He also has a weak grasp of the subtleties of an Australian teasing genre and its legitimate content – what is considered sacred, what is 'fair game'? In this classroom the students possess this linguistic knowledge. Although Pak Asheed has been invested with institutional power, the marginal position that LOTE occupies in the school coupled with the marginal position he occupies in this community as an Asian person, work to seriously erode his legitimacy to exercise this power. The classroom teacher's actions serve to further intensify this 'white-anting' of the powerful identity, 'teacher', Pak Asheed attempts to invest in.

Theorists such as Hall (1996) have explored the intricacies implicated in relations of power, replacing the deterministic notions often found in resistance studies with an interest in the emergence of dynamic and mixed identities. Rather than arguing that Mike has appropriated certain static and pre-existing cultural identities and modes of discourse as a means of engaging in the counterscript, what I believe this analysis reveals is that this process of construction is more of an emergent response to the discursive context (Hicks, 1996). The

picture that emerges of Mike is one that emphasises the agentic and transformative nature of his discursive activity as he strategically engages in the construction of the counterscript, attempting to consolidate his position of power. He displays competence in the appropriation of voices that have status within this social context; however, the competence he is displaying is antithetical to the intended development of Indonesian linguistic and cultural competence. This analysis points to the emergence of a more dynamic concept of resistance, one that eschews absolutist ideas and notions of unitary identities, and engages with ideas of conflicting ideologies working within the individual creating inconsistent and contradictory forms of understanding and behaviour. Rather than romanticising the heterogeneity of voices and the ways that students resist the oppression of the teacher's monologic script, I have described ways in which all participants are complicit in developing barriers to the development of intercultural and linguistic competence.

### Correspondence

Any correspondence should be directed to Elizabeth Hirst, School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Gold Coast PMB50, Queensland 9726, Australia (e.hirst@griffith.edu.au).

### Notes

1. *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco, 1987), *Australian Literacy and Language Policy* (Department of Employment Education & Training, 1991), *Australian Second Language Learning Program* (Department of Employment Education & Training, 1990), *Asian Studies Program* (1991), *Widening Our Horizons* (Leal, 1991), *A Statement from the Minister: Languages Other Than English* (Braddy, 1991).
2. The video camera was positioned in one corner at the back of the classroom, and other than switching it on was left without an operator. Students appeared to lose interest in the video camera after two weeks. An extension microphone was attached to the camera and positioned on a student's desk. It must be noted that the video camera is not a neutral eye in the classroom, but is one source of providing data, it permits an extension of the number of readings that can be made of the classroom, its view is also partial and interested (Reid *et al.*, 1996).
3. Key to transcript: Participants (pseudonyms): PA – Pak Asheed (LOTE teacher); J – Janis; A – Amelia; C – Chloe; M – Mike; W – Will; Je – Jessie; N – Nancy; PP – Several students; CT – Classroom Teacher; *Bapak & ibu* – translate here as father and mother, but are also used as terms of respect for older men and women. The abbreviated form of *Bapak, Pak*, is translated as Mr.; *Keluarga saya* – my family; *Adik* – younger sibling. In Bahasa Indonesia the relationships between members of a family are firstly named based on the criteria of age rather than sex, indicating a particular worldview: the language we use to read the world determines to a large extent the way we think and act in and on the world (Voloshinov, 1973); *Seperti* – like, similar to.
4. *Orang* is the Indonesian word for person, the characters in the book are *orang utan* (orangutan – an anthropoid ape found in Borneo and Sumatra) translated directly as 'forest person'.

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