English Education for International Students in Local Schools: Practices of Inclusion and Discourses of Exclusion

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Abstract
This paper is concerned with the ways secondary teachers in Victoria, Australia, speak about inclusive education for international students. Preliminary analysis of recent research shows teachers understand that English language teaching is crucial and are committed to its good practice. Nevertheless, further analysis suggests teacher approaches to education are contested, support a deficit view of teaching practice, and simplify notions of language and culture to their discrete and systemic characteristics vis-a-vis their embodied and ontological aspects. Even as teachers work to include all of their students, their efforts are mediated by discourses that negotiate the nexus between identity and difference, language and culture, and English language education. Together these discourses work to inscribe international students differently within the community, redefine the education provided to them, and constrain their access to contemporary and globalized life-worlds.

Key Words: English language pedagogy, socio-cultural theory, identity and difference, discourse, immigrant and international students, Australian education
INTRODUCTION

You’re probably in a maths class teaching all the content, and the language is on the side. Whereas with the international students… some of the kids may have the content, but they don’t have any language to go with it…. It’s really being flexible enough to see that the kids aren’t following, and drawing on it and learning different strategies and techniques until you can get to a point with that child, on that day, to feel comfortable. Yes, the child understands it…. That’s where you’ve got to be very, very flexible.¹

Over the past decade, local government schools in Australia have been allowed to take in fee-paying international students. School teachers, many with long experience working with resident as well as immigrant and refugee students, express the need for better professional education to work with this new cohort of students. They express concerns about the experience, understandings, and strategies needed to teach students who come to the school, often without their parents, under pressure to achieve high results within limited time constraints. They debate ways to teach international students, unfamiliar with the institutional and cultural context of the school, and with limited understanding of the linguistic and cultural norms and behaviors of Australian life.

¹ Bill Kane, associate principal of Inglebank Secondary College. The Inglebank case study is part of a larger research project described later in this paper. All names of individuals and institutions have been changed to maintain their anonymity.
In the quote above, Bill Kane foregrounds the central place of English language and English language teaching within educational programs for international students. He is fascinated by the different ways that language education operates in his classes. Language, he realizes, pertains to the subject matter that he teaches even as it provides the medium through which his students can talk about and understand the meaning of what he has to say. He debates the various strategies and techniques that students need to be successful. Bill Kane’s final plea, that he can be “flexible” and “comfortable,” brings to view the complexity of the relationship between his understanding of language education and his teaching work. On the one hand, he points to the language skills his students need to do their work and the way he needs to be flexible in the way he thinks and works. On the other hand, the notions that students should learn, the roles of teachers and students within the classroom, and the ways these should be described and spoken about—these all demand flexibility, are a source of unease, and are mediated within the various terms and conditions which define Bill Kane’s teaching world. The ways that teachers such as Bill Kane conceptualize their pedagogical practices with students who are second-language speakers of English, the discourses which provide the site and substance of these discussions, and the implications of these perceptions for the definition of inclusive pedagogies in classrooms—these all need to be interrogated.

This paper explores the ways that secondary teachers at a local government school in Melbourne, Australia, speak about their teaching practices with international students; it interrogates the complex relation between language, culture, and identity, which provides the substance, and mediates the practice, of English
language teaching and considers the implications of this analysis for good English language pedagogies. The paper describes data taken from a larger study which explores the impact of international students on Australian schools and the pedagogies developed to work with them. Preliminary analysis paints a picture of teachers who are strongly motivated towards helping their students and comfortable with their teaching practice. Teacher interview data, categorized into patterns using a “naturalistic approach” to data analysis (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), provides a pastiche of good practices for working with international students. Further analysis of case study data, using processes of “analytical abstraction” developed by the researcher, interrogates understandings normalized within these conversations. This approach allows the researcher to describe respondents’ perceptions from the different viewpoints provided as one explores the data as: (i) everyday practice; (ii) the relationship between those daily activities and the debates and activities that mediate their practice within social systems and institutions; and (iii) the taken-for-granted notions which provide a social cultural frame for those experiences and institutional activities. The complex and negotiated relationship between teachers’ conversations about their pedagogy; the debates that contest and institutionalize that practice and the notions which shape that relationship between language, identity, and pedagogy, can then be interrogated (Arber, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b). Research suggests that, too often, pedagogies for international students are based on a deficit view of teaching practice, with an emphasis on parochial and technical expertise and the simplification of language and culture to their discrete and systemic rather than their embodied and ontological aspects (for instance,
Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Faine, 2009). My argument is that such pedagogical approaches are constructed ambivalently, as they are enmeshed within other debates and understandings, including the following: the form, substance, and practice of language, culture, and curriculum; the importance of language and cultural maintenance and integration; and the politics of inclusion, identity, and difference. The way different teachers understand the nature and substance of language influences the ways in which they design their programs. These decisions are made within institutions and within normative frameworks which define the ways in which the everyday world is understood and performed through language. To be inclusive, the exploration of English language education must become more comprehensive and account for the reflexive and multidimensional characteristics of language. Language can be explored as having phenomenological and textual features—the words we use; the grammatical structures that string those words together; the intonation we use as we speak them. Language takes place as a relationship between others within space and time. It describes the ways that we perform the different activities that make up our communication. Finally, language has notional dimensions. Language is meaningful. The symbolic, performative and meaningful characteristics of language are understood contextually. The understandings and interchanges that take place between individuals as they connect through language are mediated by programs and procedures that take place within institutional structures. The systemic debates and process which shape institutional life are, in turn, framed within a historical, social, and cultural context shaped by language.
I develop my argument in four sections. In the first section, *The Research and Its Methodology*, I describe the research project that provides the data for this research and the methodology used in its analysis. The naturalistic paradigm which underpins the research method provides data to develop a picture-in-action of teacher practice (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Dorothy Smith’s (1987) dictum is that such attention to the day-to-day knowledge of practitioners is imperative, but needs to be problematized as it is negotiated within the institutional and normative contexts of real schools. Critical theorists emphasize that the notions and materialities that mediate the everyday conversations of practitioners need to be made transparent and the terms and conditions of their arguments laid out as a way of understanding their effects and to work with their consequences (Lather, 1991; Pillow, 2007). Following a process of “analytical abstraction” (Arber, 2008b), I argue that data that explores everyday experience needs to be analysed in context and from the different vantage points of its practice, systemic interplay, and ontological framing.

In the second section, *Breaking the Ice: Teachers Speaking about Pedagogy*, I implement this framework to explore data taken from three interviews with teachers as they discuss the teaching practices they use to teach English to international students. These teachers provide a comprehensive account of strategies implemented within their English language teaching programs. Shifting the perspective of the analytic process to explore how teachers navigate their decisions about good practice within the terms and conditions of a social world allows the ideas that are framed by and evidenced through language to be interrogated.
The third section, *Language, Identity, and the Manifestation of Teaching Practice*, explores the sociolinguistic and sociocultural literature to develop a more adequate methodological framework to interrogate the nexus between sociolinguistic and sociocultural notions which mediate the ways teachers formulate their pedagogy.

In the final section, *Practices of Inclusion and Discourses of Exclusion*, I argue that conversations about inclusive language teaching practice need be more complex to disaggregate the complicated nexus of systemic and ontological discourse which mediates their expression and provides their substance. That is, teachers’ discussions about practice need to be analysed more broadly to explore the narratives and texts used in classrooms along with the institutional structures and the beliefs and ideas which shape them. Commonplace understandings about the nature and composition of language, the strategies and practices that underpin the ways it should be taught in classrooms, and the normative context of texts and subject matter—all mediate the ways that teachers understand their work with international students. They intersect with older notions of race, identity, and difference and newer understandings about global contexts to shape and constrain international student programs and curricula. Within the ambit of the ambiguous spaces defined by these discourses, teachers strive to be flexible and feel comfortable that they provide inclusive education and good English language education for all of their students.
THE RESEARCH AND ITS METHODOLOGY

The larger research project described in this paper comprises a statewide study of the impact of fee-paying international students on the provision of secondary education in Victoria. It includes survey data from nearly 200 schools (Arber & Blackmore, 2007), and case studies of 16 government schools (Arber, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b; Arber & Blackmore, 2007). The case studies comprise open-ended interviews with school representatives, deliberately sampled to include English language and class teachers. Based on naturalistic research methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), responses to focus questions concerned with the implementation and impact of international student programs were organized into patterns to identify conceptual issues, establish links, and explore specific instances illustrative of wider shifts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This paper describes interview data taken from three teachers as they discussed English language teaching practice in one of the case study schools.

The essential assumption of a “naturalistic method” of human inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is that people understand the world around them through the meaning they give to their day-to-day

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2 Open-ended questions asked of teachers in the case studies focus on the following:
1. Tell me about yourself and the work you do.
2. Describe the school and your classroom. Describe the students in your class.
3. Describe the ways you teach your subject matter to your students. What do you see as being good curriculum and practice for your students? What do you see as being changed? Why?
4. What obstacles or enabling factors within and outside of the school impact on the ways that you can implement your curriculum and practice?
actions. The ad hoc and changing everyday experiences of practitioners are examined, and the thoughtful comments of good teachers about their practice are considered carefully to build a compendium of good teaching practice in schools. My project is to implement, but also to augment and to problematize, such a research focus upon the changing, haphazard condition of day-to-day practice.

A framework of “analytical abstraction” focuses the analytical lens variously from the many vantage points of the exigencies of everyday life as they are embodied in the local historicity and peculiarities of “lived worlds,” negotiated within the complexity of institutional and systemic processes and practices, and shaped by the terms and conditions of the everyday social world that has come to be (Arber, 2008b). The task is to interrogate “what everybody knows experientially” as it is embodied and located in time and space (Campbell, 2007).

The ways of understanding and behaving that teachers assume when they discuss their perceptions appear to them as normal and as the way that things have always been. Such shared and taken-for-granted views of what-is and what-can-be are shaped within the different ways of thinking and acting contained within the language and cultures of a changing and increasingly interconnected global context. They make up the interweaving and competing discourses that link the day-to-day experience of the social world and what appears as forever normal, taken-for-granted, and historically forever. The interrelations between contingent and unequally empowered discourses make up a “terrain of imagination” that provides the normalized frames of understanding through which everyday practice and social conditions are experienced. These are
frameworks of meaning that underlie the universe of social knowledge: the ideas, facts, and unities that formulate it and the normalized ways of understanding and being within it. Contained within language and culture, these processes, notions and behaviors emerge from, shape and maintain power structures and ideologies. This “terrain of imagination,” which frames everyday practice and social conditions (Anderson, 1991; O’Callaghan, 1995, p. 22), describes a multilayered complexity of discoursal space that has profoundly material effects as different notional forms are played across patterned fields of power that constitute and transform social relations and identities. Identities negotiate who they are and the ways they can behave and belong within the social world. These manoeuvres are part of a play between the often fragmented and divergent ways of understanding and being that define the person they wish to become and that which identifies them as the person that they can come to be. To examine these relations in their intricacy is to develop a methodology that can direct the analytic process to view from different vantage points the multidimensional and ambivalent nexus between the notional and material terms and conditions that define, and are defined by, identities and the process of identity formation.

BREAKING THE ICE: TEACHERS SPEAKING ABOUT PEDAGOGY

Ambivalent connections between raced, classed, and gendered discourses of identity and difference frame the ways in which a local government secondary school in Melbourne, Victoria, takes in
international students. Red-brick second-story classrooms of
Inglebank Secondary College overlook green ovals and beautiful
views of tree-lined streets and city skylines of gentrified suburban
Melbourne. The school’s positioning is deceptive. Few parents in the
immediate vicinity send their children here. The majority of local
students come from outside of this upper middle-class and
traditionally Anglo-Australian area, including some who travel
kilometers to come to the school from Melbourne’s outer suburbs.
They come from a diversity of ethnic and non-English-speaking
backgrounds and mostly low socioeconomic backgrounds; they are of
mixed academic aspiration and ability, and are male—their sisters
attend government girls’ schools some distance away. The school,
one of the first government schools to do so, implemented the
international students program to maintain student numbers and
funding. There are now nearly 80 international students at the school:
60 per cent are from China; the rest are from Hong Kong, Thailand,
Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and East Timor. More academically inclined
fee-paying international students are drawn to private schools or
sought-after government schools.

The analysis of conversations with three teachers from
Inglebank, as they discuss language teaching practice within the
school, suggests that their different ways of understanding language
frame the ways that they understand and implement their teaching
practice.

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Dorothy Norbet, ESL coordinator in the international student
program, argues that the new Victorian Essential Learning Standards
(VELS) is an unhelpful guide to assessment practices for teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL):

The curriculum structure is really quite good. The assessment structure, no. We’ve changed our assessment over to…assessment structure used by a lot of stand-alone language centers, because the CSF [Curriculum and Standards Framework] is really hopeless in that regard…Belinda has got copies of the test they gave at Cardigan ’cause the Cardigan course seems to me to be…one of the most sophisticated and developed around….

Norbet’s belief is that second-language students within her classes are best provided for by the more structured and sequential programming and systemic language testing instruments provided by language training courses such as that provided by Cardigan College (not its real name). Her focus on vocabulary and grammar-based teaching considers the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic educational demands of international students as technical, practical, and testable. She dismisses teaching approaches concerned with the meaningful and behavioural characteristics of language and culture as being less useful to her students. Norbet’s conviction that international student aspirations are best met by the rigorous development of technical English skills is confirmed by her belief that the semantic and systemic aspects of language are most important if international students are to meet university entrance requirements:

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3 Norbet continues to call the curriculum document by its old name.
I mean pedagogy, you know, I forget about it when it comes to that level. They want to get into university, and I know that they have to sort of be able to do certain things in order to succeed in year 12. So all this kind of individual learning plans that we do at junior level sort of goes out the window a bit in year 11.

The different ways in which Norbert understands language affects the ways in which she defines her teaching. From one viewpoint, Norbert negotiates the ways that she can implement her classes systemically, and she literally does not have time to implement her programs in the ways that she would like. Moreover, she feels that programs that provide grounding in the technical aspects of language provide the best mechanism to enable her international students to access a university education. On the other hand, Norbert’s lament that she is not able to provide the multidimensional approach to language education she employs in her other classes suggests that she has declined to implement the “certain things” that relate to the broader knowledge and skills she implements to help her other students succeed. The integrated, notional, and critical skills that provide the basis of the “individual learning plans…at junior level” are neglected, replaced by greater emphasis on the technical aspects of English language and the subject content it describes. Arguably, her exclusive emphasis on the notional and skill-based aspects of language entails a narrow, essential, and mechanical approach, ignores the meaningful and normative aspects of language, and leads to a more constricted provision of education than that provided to her other classes (for example, Freebody & Luke, 1990).

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Conversations with Jeff Rogers, year 8 coordinator and English as a second language (ESL) teacher, demonstrate a broader understanding of the learning needs of his students to include the embodied and normative aspects as well as the encoded aspects of language. His teaching strategies include an eclectic mix of teaching techniques that emphasize the development of good classroom communications and a commitment to the development of a supportive communicative culture between himself and his students:

Look, the kids will eventually…someone will eventually say something, and even then it’s very quiet, you know. So I try to break the ice with them. I try to make it as user friendly as possible. But that means that sometimes it will take a bit longer to get through something than I would like, but because they’re ESL kids, that’s OK, provided we can get through the course overall. If something takes a little bit longer than it would in a mainstream [class], then that’s fine.

Rogers’s teaching practice centers on the development of meaningful and interactive classroom action that integrates his international and ESL students into a classroom community of language users. His skills and knowledge as a teacher—providing sufficient wait time, teaching note-taking skills, encouraging his students to speak confidently—help make the course more “user friendly.” Language learning, in this sense, is about the ways in which students can “perform” the language and culture of the classroom as much as it is about the language skills and codes that they need to
know. That is, along with the discussion of the structure and content of language, Rogers’s teaching explicates the social grammar of rules and of speaking and interpretation that defines the roles people play within communities (Kramsch, 1993). These rules, as they are the substance of and are defined by language, are played out within a sociocultural context which also demands interpretation. The matter of “breaking the ice,” of helping students to enter comfortably into the community of the classroom, has several dimensions. Rogers’s emphasis on language as it is made meaningful within communities of practice is embedded in his commitment to their English speaking and reading practice:

But [I] always tell my kids, ESL kids, whether they’re ESL [or] overseas kids, to read. Read newspapers. Read anything you can. And try to speak English when you’re outside school, ’cause a lot of them, they’ll speak English here, but when they get home, that’s it, no more English, and it’s sort of like one step forward, two steps back. And if they’re in class, I won’t let them speak in their home tongue. I make them speak in English if they’re discussing something.

Rogers integrates well-honed classroom skills to immerse his students within the everyday knowledge and experiences that provide the content of his subject matter. The substance of his teaching materials, rather than their form, provides his teaching focus. Rogers’s teaching centers on activities that immerse his students in everyday and authentic communication. The interchange of language within everyday classrooms and the ability of students to take meaning from
the language medium through which experience is expressed and understood provide the focus of his teaching. Rogers’s commitment to the development of his students’ English language communication and linguistic skills requires that the systemic and codified elements of language are practiced in context and made meaningful. Much more than the practice of grammar and vocabulary, English education requires the use of language patterns regularly and meaningfully, within real contexts.

Although committed to elucidating the meaningful aspects of language and its embodiment within the practice of everyday classrooms, Rogers is unaware that the way he teaches articulates common ways of communicating within and about the classroom world framed by normative understandings about language, identity, and difference. Encouraging his students to speak and write English exclusively adds a new dimension to Rogers’s argument. While recognising the need for students to engage with the normative aspects of language within authentic contexts inside and outside of the classroom, it ignores the cultural and political underpinning of cross-linguistic communication. This encouragement to speak English language exclusively takes place within historical and traditional mechanisms and understandings that frame the formulation of English language and its relationship to other languages and cultures. Rogers’s lament that when students return home and speak their “home tongue”—“[it’s] sort of like one step forward and two steps back”—highlights the ideological tensions that underpin this curriculum activity he has to “make them” do.

Moreover, Rogers’s contention that the exclusive use of English language in school and home is good educational practice is
framed by the unequally empowered terms and conditions of the relationship between language, identity, and difference. Far from facilitating the learning of second-language students, speaking the new language exclusively often means that the students do not access the contextual and normative understandings that they already have in their first language. Some argue that students learn better if they are able to access their studies in their first language (L1) as well as their second language (L2) and argue that denying access to L1 has an ideological as well as a linguistic rationale (for example, Cummins, 2007). This view is reflected in a push for assimilation of the home language and culture into the classroom culture (Cummins, 2007). Rogers’s final aside that “it’s sort of like one step forward, two steps back” can be read at two levels. On one reading it suggests (arguably) that by speaking their mother tongue at home students lose facility in English and that makes it harder for them to learn. A second and more contentious reading suggests a yearning for students to be like us and a fear that students might go backwards, subverted into a home culture and a home tongue, which is deficient and less capable of discussing “something.”

Underpinning Rogers’s conversation is a frustration that students do not interact within the culture and language of the classroom in predictable ways:

Probably the biggest difficulty with these kids is their cultural background, is that they listen when you talk, and some of them...the majority of them are very reluctant to speak up in ESL class...Sometimes it’s very frustrating...They’re quite happy for me to put notes on the board and they’ll write them down on their
paper. Anything you put on the board they’ll write
down—anything and everything. ‘Cause that’s what they’re used
to…But here, the system…here is we encourage the kids to talk
and share ideas in year 12. That’s been a bit of a problem.

Rogers’s understanding that language has embodied, as well as
encoded, aspects is framed by normative notions which define the
rules which structure the performance of the roles that teachers and
students take up within the classroom. The social and cultural
discourses of identity and difference impinge on his reports about the
skills and abilities of his students and tinge their descriptions with the
ambivalence of the stereotype. Like other teachers, Rogers reports
dissatisfaction that his students do not discuss their work with him.
Throughout his lesson, he “tries to get them” to speak up. His initial
concern that students do not have “confidence” shifts to annoyance
that they are “quite happy” to write down whatever he tells them. His
final concern that students are behaving this way because “that is
what they are used to” can be read at two levels. Rogers means to
show that he understands they come from another culture, where
things are done differently. He is frustrated by students he describes
as poorly equipped by their former education to cope with the
demands of his classroom. A second analytical move describes a
homogenous group of students who, regardless of their individual
histories and personalities, are constructed as disabled by inflexible
cultural practices, where students are asked to copy “anything and
everything” unthinkingly from the blackboard.

It is not just the cultural practices of international students that
are described as universally shared, unchanging in their application,
and problematic in their effectiveness—so too are the institutions in their “home country:”

Because a lot of them come from very strict educational institutions over in their home country, and here it’s just very different for a lot of them. Some of them can’t deal with that. They don’t know how to deal with the fact it doesn’t seem to be as strict in our system here in Australia than it does overseas.

The cultural and individual differences exhibited by international students are described as products of a dysfunctional educational system that leaves students without the skills to cope with the system in Australia. The homogenous and unchanging “lot of them” does not have the resources to deal with “our system here in Australia,” which does not “seem to be as strict.”

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Belinda Chambers, part-time ESL teacher, provides the most comprehensive understanding of the substance and the implementation of pedagogies of English language education. Complex and individualized, Chambers’s teaching programs cater variously for students with little or no English language or academic experience and students who are highly educated in their own language and who require nuanced understanding of English language features and genres. Her students come in at different times:

Because we’ve got them from year 7, 8, 9, and 10, 11 mixture, that’s why we’ve got sometimes completely different composition with the class. And then some will go out and do maths. And then
other ones would come back in; so they’re constantly changing.
So it’s almost like a lot of the time it’s been almost individual
programs. So we’ve set up folders for them all. We’ve got them
working on different novels, different things.

Chambers’s teaching focus is flexible and broad, and includes
the following: developing individual programs for her students;
immersing them into the meaning of language; showing them the
authentic use of language through different mediums and modes and
in different contexts; and examining the lexical forms they require to
do this. Her language teaching practice accounts for the material and
normative conditions that underpin the different approaches students
bring to their learning, the knowledge and skills teachers require to
work with these students, and the physical environment international
students inhabit within the school. International student meeting
rooms provide a tangible space somewhat separate from the social
and cultural institutions articulated more generally within the school.
Chambers uses her position as a TESOL expert to advocate for her
students and to explain to her teaching colleagues the cultural and
linguistic difficulties students might have. Nevertheless, Chambers’s
participation within the intercultural and cross-linguistic exchanges
she has with her students is ambivalent. The complex terms and
conditions that frame Chambers’s place within the
multidimensionality of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interchange
can be seen in the extract below. The demands of delivering
personalized programs for each student are wearying as Chambers is
“basically running around…reading to them…checking vocabulary,
ideas…[and] question sheets” in a whirlwind of activity:
...last year was a nightmare. We had about 12 students at the end of last term, last year. Had about 12 students ranging from kids who couldn’t even say their names, to a couple of kids from Vietnam who had private English lessons since they were five and they were really writing at a very high level. So what they needed was being introduced to a whole lot of genres they were going to encounter at senior secondary school and getting used to the cultural differences, and just refining their language.

Chambers’s bid to ensure that students become cognizant of the multidimensionality of culture and the language they need to be successful within the school involves her providing them with the practices, meanings, and cultural understandings required to fulfil the auditory and textual requirements of their various school curricula. Students are provided with the lexical, meaningful, and narrative aspects that make up the multiplicity of “genres” they will encounter throughout their senior secondary school experience. The bid to develop the linguistic and cultural potential of each student makes her workload a nightmare. It is made more difficult by the huge disparity that exists between their academic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds and it is framed within the ambivalence in which the multidimensionality of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural relationships is immersed. The binary notions of respect for the home culture and appropriate access to Australian institutions affect the ways she understands her pedagogy. Students need to be introduced to different English genres and to get used to the “cultural differences” that underpin their approach to schoolwork. Chambers’s social justice approach too easily slips into the “orientalist” condition
of owning and knowing her students: e.g. these students that “we had” is read as “they belong to us” (see Said’s (1991) first rendition of this concept). She knows “what they needed” and what “they were going to encounter.” Moreover, in extending herself to ensure their progress and entering this “nightmare” level of activity, she is sacrificing herself on their behalf. Chambers is concerned that the students should be properly looked after, as they are in need of mothering and her help:

I sort of mother them all, because I feel so terrible about them. On the whole, they’re not behavior problems. So I think...we have some local students who are absolute nightmares. Surely you can be sympathetic to the kids, who through no fault of their own.... But anyway. So you get a bit of whinging.

Chambers believes her students to be in need of her help, and contrasts them, sympathetically, to her local students. She “feels so terrible about them.” She sees herself as having the ability to help them and “mother them all.” The international student, differentiated by her sympathy, is contrasted to the “normal” local students who, though some of them can be “absolute nightmares,” clearly seem to be regarded more empathetically within the school. Although Chambers is quick to explain that the problems international students present are “no fault of their own,” to her the students seem to be both benign and problematic—students who could cause “difficulties.” Moreover, Chambers understands herself to be the champion, perhaps even the savior, of her students. She feels empowered by her place as a teacher in a Western classroom to feel sorry for international
students who belong to her by virtue of the fact that they are in her classroom, and she continues to help them despite the fact that they can’t help exhibiting problematic behaviors.

Chambers’s legitimate attempts to help her students are distorted by the discoursal lens through which she feels herself “owning” students whom she knows and for whom she provides. Oblivious and unquestioning of her own, and particularly empowered, place within the classroom context, Chambers regards her students. The international student, who provides the focus of Chambers’s response, is “an-other,” who is loved by her but faulty. The international student is held steadfastly in her gaze as she, like Rogers, perceives the international student through the same ambivalent logic of raced difference.

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My argument is that conversations about good pedagogy for students whose first language is not English can be understood comprehensively by making transparent the complex multidimensional relationship that exists between language, identity, and the formulation and implementation of teaching practice. The interpretation of data patterned by research techniques suggested by a “naturalistic approach” (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) rightfully described teachers in the case studies as caring about their students and conscientious and reflective about their classroom practice. Nevertheless, further analysis of this material suggests that the pedagogies used by these teachers were often problematic, supporting a deficit view of teaching practice and constraining the ways international students belonged within the school. I am suggesting that the inconsistencies between the ways that teachers spoke about
their practice and its implementation can be usefully explored if we view these conversations from the different vantage points provided by a comprehensive review of the literature regarding the content and process of language.

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND THE MANIFESTATION OF TEACHING PRACTICE

My project—to explore the multilayered complexity of the discoursal space which mediates the relation between language and identity and day-to-day practice, its various material effects and notional forms, and the taken-for-granted “historical forever”—has at least three dimensions. One dimension describes the different perspectives from which language can be viewed: as contingent experience and practices, as fields of material effects and notional forms, and as the taken-for-granted “historical forever.” A second dimension describes the codified, embodied, and ontological characteristics of language. Another dimension examines the dialogic, systemic, and normative manifestations of everyday practice as it is framed by and takes place through language.

This examination of the reflexive and interconnected complexity of language provides an analytical lens that can distinguish between the codified, embodied, and ontological characteristics of language on the one hand, and its dialogic, systemic and normative manifestations on the other. Kramsch (1993) makes a useful distinction between the normative, embodied, and symbolic aspects of language, describing the different viewpoints from which
the substantive, procedural, and performative aspects of language can be understood. In her three-dimensional frame, language “expresses social reality”—it is the way in which people refer to the stock of knowledge, understandings, attitudes, and beliefs other people share. Language also “embodies cultural reality”—it is the way people create meaning through the different mediums of language available to them. Finally, language “symbolizes cultural reality”—it describes the way in which language consists of a system of signs and symbols which themselves have a cultural value.

Focusing the analytical lens from these different vantage points suggests that the different understandings teachers have of language affects the ways in which they approach their teaching. Norbert emphasizes the importance of teaching international and immigrant students “crucial” concepts and “hard” vocabulary and argues for an organized approach toward making transparent, modelling, and scaffolding linguistic knowledge. The attention that she pays to the meaningful aspects of language in her other classes is constrained by her perception that time constraints and the students’ best interests are best met by a strong emphasis on the structural, technical, and symbolic aspects of language. Rogers’s greater attention to the meaningful and performative aspects of language—its “social grammar of roles, settings, rules of speaking, and norms”—indicates his awareness of the ways that language provides the mechanism through which students interact with the world and portray their identities, even as they use language to embody meaning. His teaching approach focuses on the technical and strategic aspects of language learning and the ways that students perform their language practice at home and within the school context. Like Norbert, Rogers
is concerned that students do not work within the classroom in expected ways. His teaching approach focuses on the ways that students can learn about, integrate, and perform essential classroom skills and roles in established ways that he understands as being in binary relation to those the students practice at home or within their home country. Finally, the signs and symbols of texts that make up the ways that language is used to perform the activities and embody the identities we inhabit within the everyday world are promulgated in shared ways of understanding, being, and behaving, made sense of and spoken about reflexively through the privileged medium of language. Chambers works with each student to ensure that they understand the meaning context as well as the linguistic notions they need to understand their work. She encourages students to read varieties of texts, read their materials for meaning and structure as well as for their expression and institutes a variety of techniques—simulation games, videos, creative writing tasks—to help students understand the narrative and normative context.

Kramsch’s (1993) point is that this negotiation between different aspects of language takes place within the broader context of a social world articulated through language. Language describes the ways that we understand and speak about the social world in which we act and in which “meaning is produced and exchanged,” even as it is the principal means through which we conduct our everyday lives. Articulated through language, the culture of everyday practices draws on commonalities of shared history and traditions, the ways that people are positioned, belong, and share in that history, as they are meaningful and appear as “normal.” Gee and Green’s (1998, p. 127) notion of the “reflexive” aspect of language “in which language always takes on a
specific meaning from the actual context in which it is used, while, simultaneously, helping to construct what we take that context to mean and be in the first place” brings to view a social world mapped out within the quagmire of unequally empowered and competing discourses. Language and identity are crucially linked as language shapes the different ways people are understood and included within a society, even as it provides the mechanism of their identification.

Unpicking this complexity suggests another set of vantage points from which the data can be viewed, as language may be seen as performance, in that it is dialogued and mediated. The symbolic, embodied, and notional conditions of language as they are understood and produced through language are the focus of sociocultural and sociolinguistic literature. Kramsch’s (1993) interrogation of the codified, embodied, and meaningful aspects of language are site and subject of the normative concepts and materialities which shape everyday understanding and behaviors. It is through negotiation and mediation of the normative and systemic, as well as the symbolic and substantive, aspects of language that the “justification” and the “dialectic resolution” of such day-to-day tensions are made transparent. In Stuart Hall’s (1997) terms, the signs and symbols of texts and the activities of the everyday which make up the binary of language/culture are promulgated in shared ways of understanding, being, and behaving made sense of and spoken about through the privileged medium of language. The embodiment of language, along with the subjectivity of those who perform it, is in a sense a “performance” in which a self-conscious performer chooses an act, which is “performed.” Power operates through the creation of different subject identities in ways that strengthen and legitimize them
through countless acts of reiteration and performance that seek “to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one” (Butler, 1997, p. 33). Students and teachers perform, “make sense of the world,” and “explore the possibilities available to them” through the medium of language (Britton, in Kostogriz & Doecke, 2008, p. 261). The roles available to students and the ways they are embodied within their experience are set up within countless behaviors and understandings developed historically, but assumed to be “normal.”

The complex, multidimensional interchange that underpins the process of performance and its formulation through and about language is contained within the relationship between the “utterance [the word or sentence] and its meaningful and inseparable relationship with the communication” (Bakhtin, 1981; Day, 2002, p. 11). The principle of dialogicality—that the addressee and speaker have a mutual role in the construction of utterances—emphasizes the complex interrelation between self and other that underpins communicative activity with others as identities struggle for the “symbolic freedom” to create a voice from the resources at their disposal, and in response to the voices of others. Language teaching practice takes place within a fundamentally social context in which language provides the frame and the means of negotiating its very terms and conditions. It is part of a process of “symbolic domination” whereby certain social groups maintain control over others by establishing their view of reality and their cultural practices as the most valued and, perhaps more importantly, as “the norm” (Bourdieu, 2007). The specifically sociolinguistic properties of discourse have power as they express the social authority and social consequence of those who utter them. The ideas expressed by speakers and listeners
in everyday classrooms are mediated by an “ontological complicity” between how we have come to define the world “objectively” and the internalized structures that provide the framework or ways to understand and work within that world.

That utterances are “languaged,” even as they take place within a context made visible and performed through language, provides the basis of the relationship between language, identity, and pedagogy interrogated here. Teachers and students are positioned and assigned identities through categorizations that “rely on the recognition of difference.” Boundaries are drawn around those which are the same, as opposed to those which those within the category are not (Rattansi, 2007, p. 115). The positioning and identification of subjects is made through difference, as people are defined, placed, and called into being through an ensemble of social practices and technologies (Luke, 2003). In a social world described within the tangle of unequally empowered and competing discourses, language and culture become the site and subject of the different ways people are understood and included within a society. The character of voice and the bodily performance of language mark who we are and what we can become, just as physical characteristics such as skin colour do (Arber, 2008a, 2008b; Rizvi, 1995, 2005). Language, as the mechanism through which we understand and act upon the world, becomes the frame through which the terror and violence of unequally empowered social worlds is maintained. The ontological conditions which make these notions meaningful (from their different perspectives) may be changed, but they are changed through the framing power of language (Dwyer, 1997; Fanon, 1990; Said, 1991). The normalization of the way-things-are naturalizes the ways the world is known and hides the
manner in which some are remade as “other.” The social world becomes accepted within the paradigm of the imagery, traditions of thought, and vocabulary provided within the taken-for-grantedness of the everyday language “we” use to describe our identity in relation to a notional “other” (Bhabha, 1994).

PRACTICES OF INCLUSION AND DISCOURSES OF EXCLUSION

The point is that notions held by teachers about language make a difference even as these notions are themselves developed within an interactive process between the activities of individuals and the context of language and culture. Dorothy Norbert’s focus on codified aspects of language (grammar and spelling) works to simplify language to its more discrete and systemic characteristics. Her subsequent neglect of the substantive and meaning aspects of language and their everyday practice in real classes limits the language resources provided to her students. This affects her provision of the integrated and thinking resources that recent papers and curriculum documents argue are required to provide students with “socially congruent” repertoires to meaningfully and critically participate in contemporary changing and internationalized life-worlds (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

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4 Recent Victorian documentation explains how ‘the VELS differ from traditional curricula by including knowledge and skills in the areas of physical, social and personal learning. Skills that are transferable across all areas of study such as thinking and communication are also included. The VELS curriculum encourages a flexible and creative approach to learning’ (VELS, 2009, p. 1).
Jeff Rogers’s more robust approach to teaching language reflects his emphasis on the meaningful and functional aspects of language and the importance of using language broadly and communicatively. Nevertheless, he continues to construct the languages and cultures of international students as discrete, homogenous, and unchanging systems integrally bound to the particularities of nationality and ethnicity, and decontextualized from location and history. His students—constructed as passive subjects of outmoded cultures, problematic and inflexible social systems, and difficult family relationships—are understood by him as being caught in a cultural mismatch of expectations that it is incumbent upon the students to change. Caught within the ambiguous terminology of the stereotype, international students are pathologized, constructed as lazy, irresponsible, and ineffectual. Their country and cultures, also defined as deficient and rigid, are understood in binary contrast to a progressive and innovative “Australian culture.” It is a deficit that can be fixed only by absolute assimilation into mainstream culture. Even as the international student sits in the classroom and tries to learn to become like us, he remains “other” and deficient in a failed “mimicry” of an unmarked us (Bhabha, 1994).

Belinda Chambers’s super-human efforts to help her students ensure an interconnected approach between student learning and the symbolic, meaningful, and critical aspects of language and culture. However, even as Chambers seeks to empower her students and to help them to find and articulate their voice, she fails to understand her own place in enabling, but also preventing, that voice from emerging. Her teacher identity remains firmly located in binary relation between an always-out-of-reach and not-quite-known international student
“other” constructed in ambivalent relation to “ourselves.” Her failure to come to terms with her own place within the unequally empowered and changing discourses of the classroom calls to mind Homi Bhabha’s (1994) concept of the never quite finished, always in-between subject made in relation to others and yet never quite grounded in the enunciation of representation and firmly linked within the sociohistorical trajectories in which the day-to-day interactions of the social world take place.

Bill’s picture of the everyday world of an Australian school and the complex interplay of strategies he uses to ensure that international students are able to relate to complex mathematical notions provides insight into the everyday practices of teachers working with students for whom English is not their first language. The redirection of the analytic lens to the vantage point of the discourses which frame Bill Kane’s narrative suggests that ambivalent connections between notions of language and culture and identity mediate the content and formulation of his teaching practice. Bill Kane finds the definition of the systemic and the semantic aspects of language—and the ways these should be taught—complex and fraught with tensions. He struggles to understand the significance of the way language provides the meaningful content of subject matter, as well as the words and grammatical devices through which students learn about and are assessed within that subject matter. Mathematical learning, he argues, implies both knowledge of “words” and an understanding of the notions which provide their narrative context. Further redirection of the analytical lens enables the researcher to explore the experiences of a teacher and his students in the broader context of a classroom as they develop their knowledge of the technical and meaningful aspects
of mathematics. Along with his fellow teachers, Bill Kane is confused by the cultural aspects of language and language learning exhibited by his students. He needs to draw on different strategies and techniques to ensure that his students can work well in the classroom and relate to their subject matter. Both Bill Kane and his students participate in classrooms that operate within a social world understood and spoken about through language. Bill Kane needs to feel comfortable that his students understand the overall notional and substantive conditions of his subject matter.

Bill Kane’s encounter with the encoded, embodied, and ontological attributes of language is framed within a social world made manifest through language. The day-to-day world that Bill Kane speaks about exists within the multidimensionality of interrelated and unequally empowered discourses. The taken-for-granted understandings which provide the site and subject of the everyday world of Bill Kane’s classroom have meaning and consequences. Bill Kane understands that good teachers are “flexible” and are prepared to use strategies to adapt to the different cohorts of students they find in their classroom. The practical and notional terms and conditions that frame Bill Kane’s flexible approach to pedagogy operate within changing and unequally empowered social and historical contexts. Commonplace understandings about the ways that teachers and students should approach their teaching and learning mediate teachers’ expectations of international students’ behavior in the classroom and set the limits of teacher “adaptability.” They ground Bill Kane’s final comment that “you can get to a point with that child, on that day, to feel comfortable.” What “it” is that the child needs to understand for the teacher to “feel comfortable” is ambiguous.
Crucially it refers to Bill Kane’s willingness to continue until he is confident that the student understands the mathematical concepts he is teaching. The dimensions of “what is comfortable” provide the terms of what it means to be a good student within Bill Kane’s class. The embodied and coded condition of being “good” is not arbitrary; it is shaped within the intersection of unequally empowered social discourse and historical contingency. The multidimensionality of language provides the tensions and frames, the contested and contingent notions, and materialities that mediate what “it” is that the child must understand if Bill Kane is to be “comfortable” that they understand—and the cultural and linguistic notions and behaviors that teachers need to be flexible about.

The notion of the international student as deficient in relation to Western standards of teaching and learning and in need of “remediation” is widespread in some teaching manuals and educational literature (for example, Ballard & Clancy, 1991). Students are understood as failing to meet teachers’ expectations because of incongruities between English and other languages, deficiencies in “academic skills,” and misplaced academic expectations (Ryan, 2007). Mastery of English is equated to a deficit model of bilingualism that places particular emphasis on technical competencies (McKay, 2002) and which discriminates against speakers of non-standard forms of English (Canagarajah, 2005; Crystal, 2007; Miller, 2003). Language competence is understood as knowledge of linguistic structures and ignores linguistic performance. Language structures are taught out of context, as teachers are frustrated by students’ perceived inability to properly integrate into mainstream classroom behaviors and understandings (Yoon, 2008).
Institutional practices reinforce perceptions of students as “deficient,” reacting to concerns about their poor English skills and inability to understand plagiarism (Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Devlin, 2006).

**CONCLUSION**

This paper is concerned with the ways that teachers speak about their students as they work to institute good teaching practice and navigate the tangled mass of encoded, systemic, and ontological perception that defines (and works to shape) the classroom context of that day-to-day world. Their attempts to do so are mediated by their failure to explore the full significance of the cultural and linguistic resources they are teaching. The sociolinguistic and sociocultural literature provides a more adequate methodological frame to interrogate the nexus between sociolinguistic and sociocultural notions which mediate the ways teachers formulate their pedagogy. Commonplace understandings about the nature and composition of language, the strategies and practices that underpin the ways it should be taught in classrooms, and the normative context of texts and subject matter—all mediate the ways that teachers understand their work with international students. Emphasis on the discrete and systemic characteristics of language vis-a-vis their embodied and ontological aspects ignores the sociohistorical conditions and practical character of texts and the relations of symbolic power through which the power relations between speakers and their respective groups are actualized. Even as teachers seek to include all their students, their efforts are mediated by other discourses that
negotiate the nexus between identity and difference, language and culture, and English language education.

In order to provide inclusive education, English language teachers need to use a more holistic approach that understands language comprehensively from the point of view of its symbolic, substantial, meaningful, and normative aspects. Their curriculum focus must include an integrated approach which attends to the technical aspects of English language (e.g. spelling, grammar, and phonics), the ways that it is embodied in everyday activities (e.g. the use of body language); the meanings language has within everyday life and the taken-for-granted understandings that support those meanings. At the same time, they must understand their practice reflexively as it is both formed by, and formative of, the experiential, systemic, and sociocultural context of classrooms. Teacher practice in classrooms needs to be understood in relation to the institutional debates which define that practice (e.g. curriculum and policy statements) and the taken-for-granted understandings which frame their social world. The commonplace understandings about language and race, and identity and difference that mediate the ways teachers understand the everyday spaces of the classroom need to be clarified if teachers are to feel comfortable that they provide inclusive education and good English language curriculum for all of their students.

REFERENCES


VELS, see State Government of Victoria, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.


**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ruth Arber is a Senior Lecturer (TESOL) at Deakin University, Australia. Her research extends her interest in identity and difference in education, its implications for understanding how discourses of race and ethnicity are played out in schools and its consequences for critical and inclusive education. Her most recent application of this work focuses on the study of internationalization and cosmopolitanism in education systems which are becoming increasingly globalized. Her long experience as a teacher and lecturer of English as a second and foreign language is concerned with the application of this work for education in diverse contexts worldwide. Recent publications include articles in *Discourse, Journal of Intercultural Education, Race, ethnicity and Education, Globalization,*
本篇論文旨在探討澳洲維多利亞地區的中學教師對國際學生融入教育的看法。對晚近的研究初步分析的結果顯示教師們均能了解英語教育的重要性，且都能朝此目標戮力執行。然而，進一步分析發現教師們所使用的教學方法往往與融入教育的精神有所違悖，反映出彌補語言欠缺的教學觀點，同時簡化語言文化的內涵至語言單位與其連結的系統，而非其體現與經驗。即使教師們志在幫助所有的學生融入，他們的努力卻被異化的言談所削弱。他們的言談在同與異，語言與文化，以及英語學習這些議題間折衝妥協。這些言談呈現出國際學生被視為社區中的異鄉人，重新定義融入教育，同時限制了他們與當代及全球生活世界的接觸。

關鍵詞：英語教學 社會文化理論 認同與異化 言談 移民與國際學生 澳洲教育