

FOREVER FOB: THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF ESL IN A HIGH SCHOOL¹

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Abstract: Employing a conceptual framework informed by theories of cultural production (Lave & Wenger 1991; Levinson & Holland 1996; O'Connor 2003; Willis 1977, 1981), and using notions of linguisticism (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) and identity "markedness" (Bucholtz & Hall 2004), I examine how an ESL subject position is locally produced by adolescents of Asian and Pacific Islander descent in one high school classroom. Arguing that "ESL" in this context signifies an exoticized cultural and linguistic Other – what some students refer to as "FOB" ("fresh off the boat") – I analyse a series of classroom interactions in which long-term "generation 1.5" ESL students resist being positioned as FOB, first by challenging their teacher's positioning, and second, by positioning a newcomer classmate as FOB, instead. While they thereby relationally distinguish themselves as "non-FOB," these students' actions reproduce the same linguisticism they had ostensibly been resisting. I conclude by considering ways that the reproduction of linguisticism might somehow be interrupted.

Keywords: English as a second language, Language and identity, Linguistic discrimination, Generation 1.5, Asian, Micronesian.

1. Introduction

Public schools in the US over the past decade have seen dramatic increases in the number of English as a second language learners in their classrooms. In the academic year 1999-2000, 4.4 million kindergarten-12th grade (K-12) public school students were classified as "limited English proficient" (LEP), the US Department of Education's prescribed term for this population (Kindler 2002). In the state of Hawai'i, the number of LEP students has increased over 108% since 1989 to nearly 16,000 students, approximately 9% of the state's 2002-2003 public school enrollment (Office of the Superintendent 2003). Given the ongoing, decades-long assault on bilingual education in the US, the majority of LEP

students attending public school in this country currently receive English language and occasionally subject matter instruction in a variety of school-based English as a second language (ESL) programs.² Though these programs are designed ostensibly to enable

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² In this paper, I reluctantly add to the general terminological clumsiness in the field of second language studies by distinguishing "ESL" from "L2 English" (second language English). "ESL" is a loaded term, with many referents: Programs, budgets, instructional approaches, identity, etc. For added precision, I use "L2 English" when referring to the linguistic system of English that speakers of other

“educationally disadvantaged” LEP students to “transition” into “mainstream” classrooms, they come loaded with a range of assumptions and attitudes about, among much else, L2 learning, the function of ESL programs in relation to the larger school and societal context, and ESL students themselves. Consideration of even a few of the terms that pervade the policy literature on K-12 ESL students – *limited English proficient, educationally disadvantaged, transition, mainstream* – suggests the monolingual and assimilationist aims and deficit-oriented qualities that “ESL” can connote. Though perhaps ironic, it should come as no surprise, then, that for many high school L2 English learners, “ESL” is a stigmatizing identity category, with student attitudes toward it ranging from ambivalence to outright hostility (see, e.g., Harklau, Losey, & Siegal 1999; Kanno 2000; McKay & Wong 1996).

ESL students’ perspectives about ESL likely have less to do with the assumptions implicit in the arcane policies mandating and funding K-12 ESL programs, and much more to do with how those assumptions play out in the rules, routines, and substance of everyday classroom life. This paper, drawn from a two and a half year critical ethnography at a public high school in Hawai‘i (Tradewinds High School), concerns one such classroom, which was comprised exclusively of students of Asian and Pacific Islander descent: Ms. Ariel’s first-year ESL A class.³ It focuses on the cultural production of ESL, examining in particular the outlines of a hegemonic, institutionally-sanctioned ESL identity at Tradewinds that repeatedly positioned students labeled “ESL” as cultural and linguistic Others. This Othering worked to reify idealized, stereotypical imaginings of students’ pasts over their present circumstances, denying students the possibilities of more complex, hybrid, and shifting affiliations and identities in favor of an enduring, exoticized nostalgia. ESL students at Tradewinds, particularly the long-term US-resident, or “generation 1.5” students (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal 1999), derisively referred to this Other as “FOB” – “fresh off the boat” – a noxious label signifying a recently-arrived, monumentally uncool, non-English-speaking rube of mythical, and for some, hilarious proportions (also see Jeon 2001; Reyes 2003: 82-128).⁴ Thus, the cultural production of ESL at Tradewinds not only consisted of an “official” ESL identity as it was manifested in school policies and classroom curricula and instruction, but students’ creative responses to it as well (cf. Thesen 1997). As analysis of interaction in Ms. Ariel’s class indicates, students resisted being cast as “forever foreigners” (Tuan 1998), or being continually “put back on the boat” (Talmy 2001), and in the process, renegotiated the terms and boundaries of what ESL would signify (i.e., not them). At the same time, these students’ actions wound up reinscribing the very assimilationism and linguisticism they had ostensibly been resisting.

This paper is organized as follows: First, I outline a theory of cultural production, from which I draw some of the main theoretical concepts I employ below. I continue with a discussion of markedness as applied to identity before turning to linguisticism and a brief analysis of policies concerning ESL education in the US; this will

languages may attempt to learn. Thus, “ESL” can *include* the learning of L2 English, but is not solely comprised by it.

³ The names of the school, the teacher, the students, and the class that appear in this paper are pseudonyms.

⁴ While FOB (pronounced by its initials rather than as a word [fab] as in Jeon 2001) is a local term from Tradewinds, I should note that it was used occasionally, and then most often to refer to an absent third party. I use the term throughout this paper as a gloss for an exoticized Newcomer, a cultural and linguistic Other that I argue ESL students were often positioned as at the high school.

conclude the theoretical framework for the paper. I go on by contextualizing the study, describing Tradewinds, its ESL program, and finally Ms. Ariel's ESL A class. By examining one activity in this class, the Pop-Up Holiday Project, I elucidate some assumptions that I argue are implicit across the Tradewinds ESL curriculum. I then provide five extracts of data from classroom interaction, all of which concern the Pop-Up Holiday Project: The first just as Ms. Ariel is giving the assignment, and the last four, a single sequence two weeks later during student presentations of the project. Analysis of these data show how contested a category "ESL" is; that is, they bring to light instances in the cultural production of ESL at Tradewinds High School.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Cultural production

The conceptions of subjectivity, agency, resistance, and social practice that I employ in this paper are drawn from a theory of cultural production as elaborated by Lave & Wenger (1991), Lave, Duguid, Fernandez, & Axel (1992), Levinson & Holland (1996), O'Connor (2003), and Willis (1977, 1981), among others. Cultural production theory bears important relations to a cluster of social, cultural, and economic reproduction theories that developed in anthropology and sociology. Reproduction theories concern the ways that dominant ideologies, relations, and interests are reproduced, uncontested, through social and cultural institutions. They are informed by structuralist critical social theory in which human subjects are reduced to being passive "bearers of structural relationships . . . who share no collective principles of variation or continuity of their own" (Willis 1981: 52). The role of the school in reproduction theories is paramount: In contrast to liberal and functionalist theories that maintain schools are neutral promoters of excellence, reproduction theories implicate schools in the reproduction of hegemonic ideologies, forms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to reproduce the relations of an existing social order (Giroux 1983; Levinson & Holland 1996; Morrow & Torres 1995; Willis 1981). Thus, there are studies of the "hidden curriculum" in schooling, (e.g., Anyon 1980), analyses of "cultural capital" as the means by which reproduction occurs (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977), theories of school/workplace "correspondences" (Bowles & Gintis 1977), and other structural determinants of reproduction.

One problem with reproduction theories, however, is the determinism and homogeneity implicit in the notion of all-pervasive structural domination. As Willis (1981) argues, reproduction theories provide "no sense of structure being a contested medium [or] an outcome of social process"; instead, "agency, struggle, change – those things which at least partly . . . help to produce 'structure' to 'start with' – are banished" from consideration (p. 52; also see Lave et al. 1992). Due to the emphasis on macro-level processes, reproduction theories offer little insight into the ways that social actors negotiate the complex, dynamic, and often-contradictory conditions of everyday life.

Human subjectivity and agency are restored in cultural production and thus "add to reproduction theories . . . the sense of activity and practice" (Willis 1981: 64). The recovery of agency and subjectivity underscores the idea that power is not one-dimensional; the processes of reproduction are never guaranteed as they are "always faced with partially realized elements of opposition" (Giroux 1983: 283). This

highlights the complexity and unpredictability, the productive tensions and disjunctures, which can exist in what might otherwise be conceived as a simplistic dialectic between subject and social structure. Any reproductive potentiality of schooling “must pass through the dynamics of cultural production, the consequential making of meanings... the implacable agency of students,” notes Levinson (2001). This allows for “a more nuanced picture of how power operate[s] within schools to shape particular student outcomes” (p. 326).

Studies of cultural production, especially studies of schools as sites of cultural production, have most often concerned class, race, ethnicity, and gender. In this paper, the nexus of social inequality that I examine involves language, specifically a form of linguisticism in which L1 English monolingualism is reified over other languages, dialects, and “non-native” Englishes, as well as bi- and multilingualism.

2.2. *Native speakers and FOBs/Us and them: Markedness*

The notion of linguistic markedness applied to identity “describe[s] the process whereby some social categories gain a special, normative status that contrasts with the identities of other groups, which are usually highly recognizable” (Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 372). Unmarked identity categories are thus “less recognizable as identities” than marked ones because they appear “natural”: they are “the norm from which all [other identity categories] diverge.” Markedness therefore “implies hierarchy” (p. 372).

At Tradewinds, one such “highly recognizable,” or “marked” identity was “ESL student.” Its unmarked counterpart was “regular” or “mainstream student”; these correspond with a “non-native” and what Leung, Harris, & Rampton (1997) have called “the idealised native speaker.” As Bucholtz & Hall (2004) note, “marked identities are also ideologically associated with marked language: linguistic structures or practices that differ from the norm.” Many of the ESL students at Tradewinds spoke a marked variety of the dominant code; it is what marked them as ESL to begin with. That is, they were identified at Tradewinds by their linguistic “deficiencies,” how they “fail[ed] to measure up to an implied or explicit standard” (p. 372).

2.3. *Linguicism*

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 30) defines linguisticism as the “[i]deologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.” She goes on to assert that linguisticism is a more sophisticated, socially acceptable form of racism and classism: As openly race- and class-based arguments of superiority and inferiority have waned in government, business, education, and popular discourses, it has been “necessary to find other criteria which [can] continue to legitimate” inequity (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1994: 104). Language is one such criterion. Education institutions are primary sites for linguisticism, as discrimination based on language can be naturalized by policies that are as “commonsense” as the medium of instruction for a school: usually the majority language, often with minimal provisions for minority languages or their speakers (see Tollefson & Tsui 2004).

In terms of current US language and educational policy, linguisticism aimed at language minority students is as apparent as it has ever been (for historical perspectives see Baker 2001; Crawford 1999; Wiley & Wright 2004). Successive reauthorizations of the 1968 *Bilingual Education Act* – no paragon of linguistic diversity in even its most liberal form – moved the Act away from bilingual and toward monolingual English education, with “special alternative” ESL programs increasingly supplanting bilingual ones (Crawford 1999). This particular manifestation of linguisticism culminated in the elimination of the *Bilingual Education Act* altogether in 2002 as part of the Bush administration’s *No Child Left Behind* legislation (for an “obituary,” see Crawford 2002). Federal policy for LEP students under *The English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act* now makes no reference to bilingualism at all.⁵ Even still, around the US, efforts to cap the time students can remain enrolled in ESL classes are ongoing, reductions in ESL staffing continue, and cuts in funds for ESL teacher-training, professional development, and support services are being made (Crookes 1997). According to a recent survey, LEP students increasingly receive instruction delivered completely in English, more than half receive instruction not specifically designed for L2 learners, and curricula for LEP students are less aligned with content standards than they are for other students (Development Associates 2003). Finally, only 30% of public school teachers with LEP students have received the training necessary to teach them; of these teachers, fewer than 3% have degrees in ESL or bilingual education (National Center for Education Statistics 1996, 2002).

Linguicism at Tradewinds took many forms; in this paper, I focus on the formation of a linguistic identity hierarchy, with a marked “non-native” English speaker counterposed against an unmarked “native” English speaker. I argue that due to a “nationalist language ideology” (Woolard 1998) that was in play at the high school, an ideology in which language, culture, nation, and people were mapped onto one another in one-to-one correspondence, this identity hierarchy came to signify not only “native”/“non-native” English speaker and mainstream/ESL, but also US-American/Other, familiar/exotic, in-group/out-group, us/them (also see Leung, Harris, & Rampton 1997; Thesen 1997). I argue that the marked variants of these hierarchicalized, dichotomous identities converged in the subject position of FOB. In the data extracts below, I illustrate how the FOB subject position takes shape at Tradewinds as well as student resistance to being positioned as FOB. Resistance to such positioning holds the promise for a rejection of the linguistic hierarchy that FOB is part of; as will become clear, it also holds the possibility for its reproduction.

3. The research context

At the time of this study, the Tradewinds High School student population, like the state of Hawai‘i itself, had no single racial or ethnic majority (see Labrador, this volume).

⁵ Similarly, the branch of the US Department of Education responsible for language minority students has been changed from the *Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs* to the *Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for LEP Students*, just as the *National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education* is now called the *National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs* (see Crawford 2002).

Local-born Chinese, Filipino, and “part Hawaiian” students comprised the largest proportions of the school enrollment, along with sizable numbers of students of Samoan, Japanese, and Korean heritage. Approximately half of the school population was receiving free or reduced-price lunch, an indicator of poverty commonly used by schools.

ESL students at Tradewinds accounted for roughly one-fifth of the total enrollment. It was a diverse group, with more than 20 different language backgrounds represented, from Cantonese to Farsi to Tongan. Some of these students had been in Hawai‘i for as little as a few days, others for several years, while still others had been born in the US. They came from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, religious, socioeconomic, educational, and family backgrounds and were living and going to school in Hawai‘i for an array of different reasons. Predictably, for a group so varied, these students had a wide range of proficiencies and literacy skills in their L1s and L2 English.⁶

The comprehensive ESL program at Tradewinds indicated a strong programmatic commitment on the part of the school to providing ESL students with access to (English- language based) curriculum. In addition to dedicated ESL classes, the school offered “sheltered-content” classes in language arts, social studies, and science. The remainder of the core content courses, such as math, PE, and health, were “regular” classes, that is, they served both ESL and “mainstream” students together, with no L2 English accommodations. While I observed a total of 15 classes in these three “tracks” over a two and a half year period, I focus here on Ms. Ariel’s ESL A class. I observed this class for 68 hours over a single academic year. Field notes were supplemented by over 26 hours of recorded classroom interaction. I also conducted formal, recorded interviews with 14 students from the class as well as many more informal interviews during class time. In addition, I collected syllabi, assignments, and other documents for analysis.

3.1. A note on Pidgin

Although this is not the place to discuss in-depth the origins, linguistic features, or politics of Pidgin, or Hawai‘i Creole (see, e.g., Da Pidgin Coup 1999; Sakoda & Siegel 2003; Sato 1985, 1991), any discussion of language learning in Hawai‘i, particularly at a public high school, must acknowledge and account for it. At Tradewinds, both Pidgin and standardized English (SE) were the predominant languages: SE was reserved primarily for the classroom, whereas Pidgin was used in classrooms, hallways, courtyards and parking lots, by students and teachers alike. Due to a number of factors, however, many students in the Tradewinds ESL program believed only SE comprised their L2 environment, when in fact Pidgin did too. Reasons for this misunderstanding range from the grammatical and lexical similarities between SE and the lighter (or acrolectal) varieties of Pidgin common in urban areas of Hawai‘i, to the lack of a (critical) language awareness component in the curriculum, to not knowing about the

⁶ All evaluations of language proficiency in this paper are used in a generally descriptive sense, in order to suggest broadly the considerable variation in Ms. Ariel’s students’ L1/L2 English abilities.

existence of Pidgin in the first place.⁷ Because many students believed they were learning SE instead of Pidgin, I maintain that the linguisticism they encountered (and for some, perpetrated) was a mono-lingual English linguisticism. This does not mean that I conflate Pidgin and SE in any way.

In terms of transcription, I have used the phonemic Odo orthography (Sakoda & Siegel 2003: 23-26) to represent Pidgin in the extracts below, rather than English etymology, or an “eye dialect” (Woolard 1998: 23). The politics of representing a creole in a colonial language made this an easy decision on the one hand (see Schieffelin & Doucet 1998). On the other, determining if L2 English learners were using Pidgin in specific utterances, when those learners believed they only spoke SE, made this decision more difficult. I have used Siegel & Sakoda (2003), my own intuitions, and those of an authority on Pidgin⁸ in determining what was and was not Pidgin in the extracts below.

4. Forever FOB at Tradewinds High School

Ms. Ariel was a first-year, ESL-certified teacher, though she had considerable ESL teaching experience in public schools and elsewhere before arriving at Tradewinds. Despite her experience, she maintained that she was “shocked” by much when she first arrived at the high school, particularly the diversity of students in her classes. Due to the vagaries of administrative bureaucracy, ESL placements at Tradewinds were based not on L2 English proficiency (as measured by a placement test) but by the length of time students had been enrolled at the school.⁹ Thus, Ms. Ariel’s ESL A class was for LEP students who were in their first year at Tradewinds, be they 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th graders, regardless of their proficiency in English.¹⁰ The resulting profile of the nearly 30 Asian and Pacific Islander students in this class would serve as a challenge to even the most experienced teacher: 9th and 10th graders (and one 12th grader) from nine different language backgrounds, who, due to varying durations of residence in the US and notable differences in prior education, differed significantly in their L1 and L2 English proficiencies and literacy abilities. Approximately one third of the class was Micronesian,¹¹ most of whom were Chuukese and were considered to have “limited

⁷ A class of second-year ESL students I was once talking to was surprised to learn that their L2 environment included Pidgin as well as SE. One 16 year-old Filipina exclaimed: “so where can I learn real English?” (E422U field notes, 6/3/2002)

⁸ Jo Ann Kadooka, who is, among much else, a Pidgin speaker and contributor to *Da Pidgin Coup* (1999).

⁹ Reasons students underwent LEP testing varied from recent arrival from a country where English was a second or foreign language, to prior ESL status in a middle school, to parental request for ESL services.

¹⁰ Placements into the various “sheltered content” ESL classes were made the same way.

¹¹ At the time of this study, Micronesians were the fastest growing immigrant group appearing in Hawai’i schools (Heine 2002). While Micronesia is made up of a US commonwealth, a US territory, and five separate nations, most Micronesian students at Tradewinds came from the following three countries: the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Republic of Palau (ROP), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM, which is itself comprised of four states: Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap). RMI, ROP, and FSM are also called the “Freely Associated States” (FAS), that is, they have entered into Compacts of Free Association with the US. Essentially, the Compacts are treaties “of mutually beneficial strategic alliances” (Heine 2002: 4): The US has military bases in the FAS, and the FAS in turn receives financial and other forms of assistance from the US. Citizens of the FAS are allowed visa-free entry into

formal schooling” (Mace-Matluck, Alexander-Kasparik, & Queen 1998)¹²; another third consisted of Cantonese and Mandarin-speaking students from Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan; the rest of the students came from American Samoa, the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam. Four of the students had lived in the US for eight years or more, eight had lived in the US for between two and five years, with the remainder arriving in the US from one to six months before the start of the school year. About a third of the class, then, could be considered long-term residents of the US and long-term ESL students. This same third was also highly proficient in oral L2 English and in their L1s, though the longer-term Chinese and Vietnamese learners reported that their L1 literacy was poor. Another third of the class was near or at very basic levels of oral and written L2 English ability, with two of the Chuukese students unable to write in their L1. The remaining students were at various levels of L2 English proficiency between the advanced students and the beginners.

The policy that resulted in these students’ placements into the same ESL class signaled the Tradewinds administration’s tacit judgment that ESL students were essentially the same, a single category of learners with negligible differences in L1 and L2 proficiencies, educational backgrounds, or needs, who were identified by the simple fact that their L1s were not English. For the more advanced L2 English students, particularly those who had lived in the US for more than a year or two, the message that was communicated was untenable: Tradewinds didn’t acknowledge their years in US schools, their previous time in ESL classes, and didn’t recognize that their English was more advanced than many of their classmates’. They were ESL students only because they spoke a marked variety of the dominant code; how well they spoke it did not matter.

The notion of ESL students’ monolithic sameness was also communicated through the curriculum of the Tradewinds ESL program. Though each class had a wide range in L2 proficiency levels, little attempt was made to “differentiate instruction” (e.g., Tomlinson 1999), that is, to adapt curriculum and instruction to accommodate these differences. Students in nearly all of the ESL classes I observed were given the same books, the same assignments, the same activities, the same tests, each with the same demands and deadlines. Thus, a common complaint I heard from long-term and advanced ESL students was that classwork was too easy or that they had completed similar assignments in earlier grades, sometimes repeatedly. The undifferentiated curriculum implied an undifferentiated group of learners, a singular ESL student.

the US, where they are classed as “eligible non-citizens” and so may live and work as any “resident alien” (Heine 2002). Many citizens of the FAS have thus come to Hawai‘i seeking educational opportunity, employment, and health care. Though students from the FAS will usually self-identify as “Micronesian,” it is important to note that the RMI, ROP, and FSM are geographically, politically, culturally, and linguistically distinct.

¹² According to many of the Chuukese participants, as well as the few published reports available on education in Micronesia, formal schooling in some parts of Chuuk is considered something close to “optional,” particularly in outlying islands; schools are also often described as rudimentary and lacking basic materials. Hezel (2002: 23) states that 60% of Chuukese in 1994 completed elementary school, estimating that of every 100 students who begin school in Chuuk, only 15 eventually complete 12th grade. He also notes (p. 11) that the 1993 per-pupil spending for elementary school students in Chuuk averaged just \$421, the lowest by far in FSM (itself lowest in Micronesia). As a basis for comparison, the US national average for per-pupil expenditures in 2001-2002 was \$7,524 (Office of the Superintendent 2003).

4.1. The Pop-Up Holiday Project

Projects in Ms. Ariel's class generally took two to three weeks of class time to complete. Most involved a considerable amount of artwork, with drawings, collages, and the like counting for one-third to one-half of the project grade; a one- or two-page written summary and an oral report generally counted for the remainder. Over the course of the year, students were asked to complete numerous projects; for my purposes here, I focus on one, the Pop-Up Holiday Project. I have selected this project because it is representative of others that students were asked to complete in ESL A. It is also indicative of the ways that students were positioned in the class, and as the data below demonstrate, it typifies how some students resisted that positioning.

The Pop-Up Holiday Project came toward the middle of the school year. Students were to choose a holiday "from their own country or culture" and write a short summary about it. This would be attached to the back of a "pop-up" scene, a kind of diorama that students were to create that signified the holiday somehow, e.g., a depiction of a setting with a jack-o-lantern to represent Halloween. The project was an attempt by Ms. Ariel to cultivate student pride in "their" cultures, as well as awareness of those of their classmates, with what she believed were high-interest, high-relevance topics. In this, it was one of scores of assignments in Tradewinds ESL classes that attempted to promote the significance of and an appreciation for multiculturalism. Yet, despite the best intentions of the ESL teachers, who were working under tremendously difficult circumstances with minimal support, this turned out to be a narrowly conceptualized multiculturalism, remaining at what Banks (2001) calls the level of "contributions": A superficial focus on heroes, holidays, customs, and food; a conception of culture as a static corpus of values and beliefs; and a conflation of country, culture, language, nationality, and identity. It was a brand of multiculturalism in which ESL students were repeatedly evoked as stand-ins for "their countries," representative experts on "their cultures." This approach to multiculturalism was one which many of the students in the ESL program, particularly the long-term learners, were plainly familiar with and which some openly resisted (also see Nieto 1992).

The two students who figure prominently in the following extract are Raven and China.¹³ At the time, Raven, born in Taiwan, was in the 9th grade, and had been living in Hawai'i for eight years.¹⁴ His classmate, China, a 9th grade boy from Hong Kong, had lived in Hawai'i for four and half years. Raven's tan and blond-streaked hair, along with his usual board shorts, t-shirt, and slippers,¹⁵ marked him as the avid surfer that he was. China's sport was basketball: He was regularly seen in thick polyester shorts and a t-shirt, the latest pair of Nike Shox, and occasionally, a gold medallion depicting a silhouette of an air-born Michael Jordan around his neck. Both boys were highly proficient in oral English and in Pidgin, though China obscured the grammatical and lexical errors he would sometimes make by speaking in fast, staccato bursts. Neither boys' English or Pidgin phonology contained features that might mark them as L2 learners. Both resented their ESL placement and complained about it regularly; Ms. Ariel responded more than once by "referring" them to a counselor for punishment.

¹³ Student pseudonyms were chosen by students themselves, unless denoted at first mention by an asterisk.

¹⁴ I calculate students' length of residence in the US from the beginning of this particular school year.

¹⁵ Rubber sandals, also called "flip flops" on the US mainland.

This extract comes from the first day that the Pop-Up assignment was introduced. Ms. Ariel is giving the instructions, and as a model is holding her own Pop-Up depicting *El Día de los Muertos*, the Mexican holiday of The Day of the Dead. The class is very noisy, as it has been all period, with students talking and laughing.

(1) ‘Can I do Christmas?’ [E132W3 TM 10]¹⁶

- 1 Ms. Ariel: The assignment for – the assignment for everyone in the class is to
pick a holiday from their own country or culture (.) and to research
it
3 or if you already know all about it, fine=
Raven: =Yeah, Christmas.
5 China: [New Year!
Ms. Ariel: [You’re gonna show us what it looks like with something like this
7 ((holds up her model Pop-Up)) and you’re gonna write about it (.)
here ((points to the back of the Pop-Up)). Afterwards, we’ll share
with the
9 class, we’re gonna report.
China: (inaudible) (finish by tomorrow).
11 Eddie*: Can we just write it?
Ms. Ariel: This is what we’re doing. This is the assignment.
13 ?Ss: (inaudible)
Ms. Ariel: I have the assignment sheet [right here.
15 Raven: (((talking to China))) (inaudible) I’m
gonna draw Santa Claus [(inaudible)
17 Ms. Ariel: [And you’ll choose one holiday from where you,
you come from [and share it with us.
19 China: [Okay. Miss, I’m not gonna argue, I’m just, can I
just do Christmas?¹⁷
21 Ms. Ariel: The assignment sheet is right there.
Raven: Miss, can I do Christmas? [(inaudible)
23 Ms. Ariel: [But the requirement is it’s from your
country.

¹⁶ Transcription conventions:

word (underline) word stress
word – (en-dash) abrupt sound stop
(.) (periods in parentheses) pauses: (.) a short pause, (.) a longer pause, (. .) longer still, etc.
[word (brackets) onset of overlapping talk
[word
word= (equal signs) latched speech
=word
(inaudible) inaudible utterance
(word) (word in single parentheses) best guess at a questionable transcription
((word)) (word in double parentheses) participants’ physical movements, characterizations of talk,
and vocalizations such as laughter, coughing, etc.
word (word in italics, below a transcribed utterance) English gloss of Pidgin

¹⁷ Most students at Tradewinds addressed their teachers using the generic titles of “Miss” (for women) and “Mister” (for men), minus surnames. This is a practice that is common in K-12 schools in Hawai‘i.

In her first two turns (lines 1-3, 6-9), Ms. Ariel gives a summary of the instructions she has just given (prior to this extract) about the Pop-Up Project. In doing so, she “keys” the frame (Goffman 1974) through which the rest of the interaction (and the assignment, and the course) can be understood. Students are to choose a holiday “from their own country or culture” and either research it, or use what they already know to write a report about it. Use of the third person possessive “their” in Ms. Ariel’s first turn positions those to whom it refers (“everyone in the class”) as members of an out-group (Barker & Galasiński 2001), people who are not present, who are in some “other” place, speaking some “other” language, who are Others. It also implies an in-group, Ms. Ariel’s, to which *they* do not belong. The switch in the same turn to second person “you” (line 3), which continues into lines 6-7, transforms the instructions of the project into something more immediate: rather than an “other” person’s country or culture, it is now “yours.” This conflates and unifies the referents for “other” and “you”; the Other and the students are one and the same, and are evidently distinct from Ms. Ariel’s implied *me*. The switch to the second person additionally foregrounds the hierarchy of the teacher-student relationship, as the teacher makes a provision for students about the assignment. It also foregrounds the dichotomous hierarchies summarized in Figure 1. The power differential is further highlighted in lines 6-7, where the second person is combined with copula + going to (gonna) to form two directives: “you’re gonna show us” and “you’re gonna write.” The teacher is not only giving instructions to students about the assignment, but is assigning them the subject position from which to carry it out.

Figure 1. Linguicist hierarchies in the ESL A class

Teacher						
“Native” English speaker	Mainstream	US-American	In-group	Familiar	Us	Me
“Non-native” English speaker	ESL	Other	Out-group	Exotic	Them	You
Student						

Just what kind of subject position students are being assigned is signified by Ms. Ariel’s choice of *El Día de los Muertos* as a model Pop-Up: A holiday that is unique, that is particular to a “culture or country,” and that is not of the US. However, it appears there is a tension here that calls into question the implied equation of holiday = culture = country = language = student. Ms. Ariel is from the US, not Mexico, as the students well know; if she were to follow her own instructions, she might have made a Pop-Up of, say, the Fourth of July or Presidents Day. The possibility for multiple, shifting, or fractured (dis)affiliations, for interests and identities that are not determined by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, or place of birth is furthered by her recognition that students may actually need to research the holiday: the referent for the possessive in “your culture or country” thus appears polysemous.

This ambiguity becomes resolved, however, over the course of the interaction as Ms. Ariel repeatedly refuses to ratify Raven's and China's bids of Christmas and New Year's as "acceptable" holidays for the project. She ignores their suggestions in lines 4 and 5, and then indirectly rejects them by deferring authority to the "assignment sheet" in lines 14 and 21. Finally, use of the contrastive conjunction "but" in line 23 signals a negative response to Raven's repeated request to do Christmas in line 22. It becomes clear she is indeed referring to "other" kinds of holidays from "other" kinds of places, with "othered" kinds of students as their representatives: Simply put, Christmas and New Year's belong to her, not *them*; these holidays are unmarked. This point is reinforced by Ms. Ariel's recognition in line 3 that students "might already know about" the holiday. Because Christmas and New Year's don't qualify as acceptable choices, though most (if not all) of the students "know about" them, it is clear that what is sought is a unique holiday that students have some sort of special insider knowledge of, knowledge unavailable to Ms. Ariel or others since they do not "belong" to that culture. In fact, through her use of *El Día de los Muertos* as a model, Ms. Ariel positions *herself* as the sort of exoticized Other she envisions for her students. This is underscored by the appropriation of student subjectivity in the switch to the first person plural "we" in lines 8-9 ("Afterwards, we'll share with the class, we're gonna report") and again in line 12 ("This is what we're doing"). Ms. Ariel's example includes a model Pop-Up Holiday Project, as well as a model identity students are expected to assume.

4.2. *Resisting FOB*

By offering "Christmas" and "New Year" as viable candidates for a holiday Pop-Up, China and Raven initiate a challenge either to being positioned as FOB or to the FOB subject position itself; it is a challenge that builds over the course of the interaction. Raven's interjected aside of "yeah, Christmas" in line 4 comes as Ms. Ariel pauses between sentences in her first two turns. The timing of the utterance, combined with his quick, ironic delivery, implies that Raven knows where this assignment is going: there is no ambiguity for him about the kind of holiday Ms. Ariel is looking for, and it isn't Christmas. Raven's utterance suggests a subtle mockery of Ms. Ariel's claim on Christmas and New Year's as "belonging" to her in-group, and points to his rejection of his placement in an FOB out-group. It also signals an attempt to reposition himself as a member of a different in-group, possibly Ms. Ariel's or, more likely, a Local one he shares with other "1.5 generation" students in the class (more on this below). China immediately takes up Raven's aside with an exuberant "New Year!" However, Ms. Ariel does not address them, and until line 19, China and Raven take no further steps to reject the FOB subject position or claim an alternative for themselves.

Ms. Ariel's repeated and increasingly firm responses in lines 12, 14, 21, and 23-24, suggest that she senses a building resistance: in line 12, following Eddie's protest about the artwork component of the project ("Can we just write it?"), she responds to him, and perhaps to Raven and China as well, that the terms of the assignment are not open for negotiation, repeating a form of "this is the assignment" twice before deferring to an external authority (the assignment sheet) in line 14. China seems to recognize Ms. Ariel's growing defensiveness with his acceptance in line 19 ("Okay.") of her injunction (repeated in lines 17-18) that the holiday be "from where you, you come from." His "I'm not gonna argue" serves as an attempt to align himself further with her and

distance himself from those who presumably *are* “arguing”: Likely Raven and/or Eddie. The message communicated is that he is being serious, not antagonistic. The continuation of that sentence (“I’m just, can I just do Christmas?”) reveals what he’s serious about: He wants Ms. Ariel to accept his (new) proposal of Christmas, which echoes Raven’s, as a legitimate choice of holiday “from where you, you come from.” In this, he joins with Raven in challenging Ms. Ariel’s exclusive claim on Christmas (and New Year’s), as well as contesting his placement in an FOB out-group. An alternative (possibly Local) subject position is taking shape here, one that is defined in part by China and Raven through their denotative and interactional resistance to being positioned as FOB. Ms. Ariel responds with another deference of authority to the assignment sheet. Raven then echoes China’s request in line 22 (“Miss, can I do Christmas?”) to which Ms. Ariel invokes the assignment sheet’s newly revealed “requirement” that students must choose holidays from “your country.”

China and Raven not only challenge being positioned as FOBs in this interaction, but more broadly their opposition works to subvert the conflation of language = culture = nationality = identity.¹⁸ It could be argued that they are seeking the promise that Ms. Ariel’s choice of *El Día de los Muertos* held, however remotely and however briefly, that identity may include, for Raven, Taiwan, and for China, Hong Kong, but also other possibilities beyond those stereotypically associated with race, language, or place of birth.

Approximately half of the class wound up completing the Pop-Up project. As it turns out, most reported on New Year’s, but as it was celebrated in “their” countries. China’s presentation was one of several on Chinese New Year’s, though he did not do the artwork and his “report” was simply downloaded from the internet. Raven was ultimately allowed to do Christmas, but refused to present his Pop-Up orally. The inclusion of New Year’s and Christmas might be seen as a “victory” of sorts for Raven and China: they succeeded in getting these accepted as holidays “from where you come from.”¹⁹ More to the point, however, China and Raven’s resistance suggests the formation of an alternative subject position in the class, which I turn to next.

4.3. Reinscribing FOB

In this section, I examine four excerpts from one oral presentation of the Pop-Up Project. Here, I argue that China and Nat*, a 9th grade boy from the Marshall Islands who had lived in Hawai‘i for over 8 years, (further) resist being positioned as FOBs by positioning a classmate as one instead, thereby differentiating themselves from him and defining themselves relationally (Barth 1969; Barker & Galasiński 2001) as non-FOBs. The means by which they accomplish this differs dramatically from those employed by Ms. Ariel above: here they index their differences from Isaac*, who is presenting on New Year’s in Chuuk, by teasing and humiliation, making fun of his lower L2 English ability and his Chuukese heritage. Still, the effect is the same: the reinscription (and redefinition) not only of the FOB subject position, but the linguistic hierarchy it is part of.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that China’s choice of pseudonym exemplifies and mocks this one-to-one association.

¹⁹ For most students in the class, Christmas and/or New Year’s were, indeed, celebrated in “their” countries.

At the time of his presentation, Isaac was a 17 year-old sophomore²⁰ who had come to Hawai'i from Chuuk just weeks before. He was soft-spoken and reserved, and was the only Chuukese boy in the class. His L2 English proficiency allowed him to participate orally in most activities in Ms. Ariel's class, but he had distinct difficulty with academic reading and writing. He regularly wore baggy black jeans that were too big for him and that were rolled up at the cuffs, an oversized t-shirt, and Keds sneakers; his wavy black hair, cut short at the sides, was long on top, pomaded, and pulled into a tight pony-tail. He was as different from Raven's surfer image as he was from China's NBA chic and Nat's cultivated hip-hop style.

Isaac's Pop-Up presentation occurred about two weeks after the Pop-Up project had been assigned. A few students had already given their presentations, but most of the class hadn't completed the project yet, though it had been due on this day. Ms. Ariel was annoyed about this as well as by the fact that presentations thus far had averaged about one minute each, despite more than two weeks of class time spent on preparation.

The first in the series of data extracts that I present occurs just before Isaac gives his presentation. He is standing at the front of the class with only his written report: he has not completed the Pop-Up artwork.

(2) 'It's a country again?' [E132W5 TM 9]

- 1 Ms. Ariel: Okay. Let us know where you're reporting from.
 - Isaac: Huh?
 - 3 Ms. Ariel: Where your holiday is from.
 - China: Hwat, its a kantri [agen?
What, it's a country again?
 - 5 Isaac: [Chuuk.
 - Ms. Ariel: Country.
 - 7 Isaac: Yeah. Micronesia. Uh, Chuuk.
 - Ms. Ariel: ((to the class, nodding)) Micronesia (.) Chuuk.
 - 9 Mona*: ((mimicking Ms. Ariel)) (.) "Micronesia (.) Chuuk."
- ((Isaac laughs, Chuukese girls and others laugh; China joins in loudly, exaggeratedly))

The frame for the interaction here is keyed by Ms. Ariel in much the same way as it was in Extract 1, with reference to a far-off place, distance, the imagery evoked by the phrase "where you are reporting from." The implication is that wherever it is, it isn't "here." Following Ms. Ariel's clarification in line 3, but before Isaac has a chance to reply, China interjects with a sarcastic challenge about "it" being a country. Though it appears odd that China knows what "it" is (Chuuk), and that he's contesting it being a country, even though no reference has been made to either, he is referring to an unresolved dispute from an earlier presentation when two Chuukese girls made this assertion. China had questioned this, the girls had reemphasized it, and with the class looking on, both parties had yielded to Ms. Ariel to arbitrate. Though she had been

²⁰ Isaac was one of many Micronesian students who were not in "age appropriate" grade levels, i.e., were considerably older than their peers (see Heine 2002). The disparity between Isaac's age and grade resulted in his unexpected "release" from Tradewinds shortly after these data were collected: He had just turned 18 but was nowhere close to earning the credits needed to graduate. Over the period of this study, an alarming number of ESL students, Micronesian and otherwise, were similarly "released."

unsure, Ms. Ariel had sided with the girls, and to China's disbelief, Chuuk's status as a country remained unchanged.²¹ Thus, China's question here works as another challenge to the idea (that Ms. Ariel has endorsed) that Chuuk is a country. More to the point, it is a challenge to Ms. Ariel herself: The form of the sentence is an exclamatory question ("Hwat, its a kantri agen?") and it is spoken in a loud, deliberate, syllable-timed manner with strong emphasis on the first syllable of "kantri" and a falling intonational contour, hallmarks of Pidgin (see Sakoda & Siegel 2003: 29-30). The switch to Pidgin further emphasizes the exclamatory nature of the question, and thus China's doubt, and, as a variety that tends to be used in more informal communication, it works to compress power disparities between the institutional roles of student and teacher. It also works as a challenge to Ms. Ariel in terms of China's ongoing negotiation of who is and is not FOB: Pidgin is "Local" language (see Labrador, this issue); it is hardly something an FOB would, or more precisely, could speak. Thus, the switch to Pidgin also signals in-group membership with other Pidgin speakers in the class: "1.5 generation" students such as Nat and Raven who have been living in Hawai'i for years, who may identify more as Local than "foreign," and who resist being cast as FOB. China here not only questions whether Chuuk is a country, but Ms. Ariel's authority, her knowledge, and her power in the classroom: her position, really, to position others, especially him, as Others.

The confusion about Chuuk serves as an ironic counterpoint to the one nation/one language ideology that this assignment and the linguistic hierarchy it perpetuates promote. However, in the context of this class and this assignment, the questionable statuses of Chuuk and of Micronesia leaves the people they are identified/conflated with on an unequal footing with class members who "represent" places that are more well known, at least at Tradewinds (China, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, etc.). In other words, in the context of this class, where a nationalist language ideology is as salient as it is, that there is some question about the status of Chuuk and of Micronesia makes them somehow *less*: Less well known; less worthy, perhaps, of *being* known. Therefore, those students who are identified as Chuukese or Micronesian may be considered somehow less as *people*.²²

In response to China's question, Ms. Ariel is firm, with her one-word averral that Chuuk is indeed "Country." Isaac agrees, then confuses matters by stating "Micronesia. Uh, Chuuk." Ms. Ariel accepts this as a confirmation and repeats it for the class. Mona, a Chuukese girl, then imitates Ms. Ariel causing Isaac and the other Chuukese girls to laugh. China joins in, but in a mocking, exaggerated manner, again suggesting a double-edged challenge, one to Ms. Ariel, the other to the Chuukese.

The interaction continues after the laughter subsides. As Isaac begins his presentation, Nat begins his attempt at rearticulating the attributes of an FOB subjectivity.

²¹ As I mentioned above, Chuuk is a state, not a country. A similar issue had arisen with a prior assignment called the Flag Project: There had been considerable confusion among the Chuukese students about which flag represented "their country," and they had difficulty finding representations of it in the atlases and other reference materials Ms. Ariel had brought in for research (in contrast to the other students in the class).

²² Indeed, a racist "status order" similar to the one Bickel (2002) reports on was evident at Tradewinds, with "[s]tudents from East Asia often look[ing] down upon Micronesians" (p. 2). This racism was mostly manifest in a host of distressing comments about Micronesians' intelligence, hygiene, behavior in class, activities outside it, and motivations for being in the US.

(3) ‘Senprade’ [E132W5 TM 9]:

- 11 Isaac: Ready?
 Ms. Ariel: We’re ready.
 13 Isaac: ((reading)) “In the New Year (.) people walk a – all night and
 senprade²³ the New Year.”
 15 ?S: ((laugh))
 Ms. Ariel: Can you try a little louder?
 17 Nat: [You go out all night eat dinner?
 Ms. Ariel: [You go out all night?
 19 Isaac: ((to Ms. Ariel)) Yeah. ((to Nat)) No. Senprade [the New Year.
 ?Ss: [((laugh))
 21 Isaac: They senprade.
 Nat: “Senprade” what?
 23 Isaac: The New Year.
 Nat: The New Year?
 25 ?Ss: ((laugh))
 Nat: “Senprade.”
 27 ?Ss: ((laugh))

From Isaac’s initial mispronunciation of “celebrate” in line 14 up until line 20, students’ laughter (in lines 15 and 20) is rather muted. However, it becomes more pronounced once Nat mimics Isaac’s mispronunciation in line 22 and again in line 26; “senprade” is not just being pointed out for ridicule, but Isaac is as well. This is an instantiation of a social practice that I saw repeated countless times in the ESL classes I observed at Tradewinds, a practice that cut across cultural and linguistic backgrounds, race and ethnicity, gender, or age: The public teasing and humbling of lower L2 English proficient students by their more proficient classmates. It was one of the primary ways that students produced and reproduced the linguistic hierarchy that pervaded the Tradewinds ESL program. Here, Nat distinguishes himself (and other “generation 1.5” students in the class) from Isaac by positioning him not only as “limited English proficient,” but as someone who is either hopelessly naïve or plain stupid: Isaac does not correct himself despite Nat’s pointed repetitions of his mistake, and thus appears unaware he has even made a mistake. More to the point, however, Isaac is unaware he is *being teased*. Indeed, even before Nat’s uptake of Isaac’s mispronunciation in line 22, he has interjected (in line 17) with a mocking, yet rather unfunny “You go out all night eat dinner?” It is only after Isaac repeats “senprade” twice more (lines 19, 21) that Nat utilizes it as a (much easier, more overt) point for ridicule. Isaac’s lack of familiarity with the practice of teasing lower proficient students, so common in ESL classrooms at Tradewinds, marks him as the newcomer he is as much as his English, clothing, and hairstyle do. Nat’s redefinition of the FOB subject position has taken shape: It is someone who comes from somewhere so exotic that it may not even be a country, someone whose English is undeniably “limited,” someone who is unfamiliar with the cultures, styles, and practices of the US and its schools, someone who is, indeed, “fresh off the boat.” And it is just what Nat and China and Raven and those students who laughed in lines 25 and 27 are not. These students are stating in stark terms what the

²³ “Senprade” is how Isaac spelled “celebrate.” He pronounced it [sen↔prejd].

school, the ESL program, and the curriculum never did: that there are – that *they are* – different kinds of ESL students.

It is important to point out that there is identity work going on in this exchange beyond that concerning FOB. Nat is Marshallese and Isaac is Chuukese: both are “Micronesian” in the sense that they come from the region called Micronesia. More specifically, they are “Micronesian” as this identity is locally defined at Tradewinds: An amorphous group of mostly poor, irreconcilably alien Pacific Islanders. In these terms, Nat’s public display can be seen as an effort to distinguish himself from Isaac as a non-FOB, and as a non-Chuukese: A “different kind” of Micronesian. In effect, Nat is (re)producing another social hierarchy, this a specifically Micronesian one, with the Marshallese on top and the Chuukese on the bottom. It is a hierarchy that Bickel (2002) also reports on, and which I saw enacted at Tradewinds often.

In Extract 4, Ms. Ariel again prompts Isaac to continue with his presentation. Nat is joined by China in teasing Isaac, as Ms. Ariel continues to ask Isaac questions.

(4) ‘Yeah, that’s all’ [E132W5 TM 9]:

- Ms. Ariel: What do they do?
 29 Isaac: ((reading)) “They make noise (.) [and walk –”
 Nat: (((loud, exaggerated laugh)))
 31 Isaac: ((laugh; continues reading)) “around. Dance. And they get gift.
 They get gift from somebody else.”
 33 Nat: ((continues to laugh loudly))
 Eddie: Shut up, Nat.
 35 Ms. Ariel: You can get gifts?
 Isaac: Yes. You have to dance. People dance around and kiss anybody,
 they
 37 dance.
 Ms. Ariel: They dance on the beach with anyone they want to?
 39 China: Do they have to?
 Nat: What if I dance with your grandma?
 41 China: ((loud, exaggerated laugh))
 Isaac: ((half laugh)) Yeah, that’s all.
 43 Eddie: You’re rude.

Nat’s laughter in line 30, just after Isaac says “they make noise,” points out an apparent peculiarity of the phrase, and the loud and exaggerated quality of the laughter as well as its duration into line 33, again indicates that Isaac is being ridiculed. Eddie, a 9th grader from the Philippines who had lived in Hawai‘i for 4 years, assumes a role he frequently took in the class – its moral arbiter – and indicates to Nat that the teasing has gone far enough. But because Ms. Ariel continues to question Isaac without validating Eddie’s directive – or addressing Nat herself – it goes disregarded, and Isaac remains in the front of the room, a target for added derision. China’s question in line 39 is an apparent attempt to get in on the action, but his question is immediately upstaged by Nat’s eye-opening insult in line 40 about dancing with Isaac’s grandmother. China responds with a hearty, appreciative laugh and Isaac, perhaps at last realizing that the interruptions he has endured have been mean-spirited, signals “the end.” Eddie’s fitting coda to this segment calls attention to Ms. Ariel’s silence regarding the character and quality of

Nat's and China's contributions up to now. This is a silence that, unfortunately for Isaac, endures for the remainder of the presentation, even when students' interjections multiply, as they do in the final extract. Ms. Ariel's non-intervention, in addition to her continued questioning of Isaac in the face of the ongoing teasing, come into sharper focus next.

(5) 'Do they burn themselves?' [E132W5 TM 9]:

- Ms. Ariel: What about the fire? [Remember you told me about the fire?
 45 Raven: [(inaudible)
 Isaac: Yeah, yeah.
 47 Ms. Ariel: Listen, you guys.
 Isaac: (.) They make fire around them and (.) they dance (.) around the fire.
 49 China: So, do they burn themselves? ((laugh))
 Ms. Ariel: I asked him if anyone ever got burnt, and he said no.
 51 China: That's a lie!
 ?MSs: [(inaudible)
 53 Ms. Ariel: [They make a ring of fire and they dance around.
 Raven: Oh, oh, a ring? So they don't dance inside the fire?
 55 Isaac: No.
 ?Ss: ((laugh))
 57 Ms. Ariel: Inside or outside?
 Isaac: Outside.
 59 Ms. Ariel: Okay. ((soft laugh)) So –
 China: Do you dance inside?
 61 Nat: I did! (.) I died once.
 China: [((loud, exaggerated laugh))
 63 ?Ss: [((laugh))
 Isaac: Yeah.
 65 Ms. Ariel: How long does it last?
 Isaac: Huh?
 ((lines 67-70, in which Ms. Ariel's question is clarified, are omitted))
 71 Ms. Ariel: Is it, is it one day, is it=
 Isaac: =No. One week.
 73 Ms. Ariel: One week!
 ?FS: Oh.
 75 Ms. Ariel: Oh, so, big party.
 China: So, so nomo jab oa samting?
So, people don't work or what?
 77 ?Ss: ((laugh))
 618: So lai!
That's a lie!

In this final extract, Raven now joins Nat and China, as does 618, a Chinese girl who had lived in the US for four years (and whose intermediate L2 proficiency made her a target for this sort of teasing herself). China's quip in line 49 about whether the Chuukese who dance around fires during New Year's get burned, is ratified as a legitimate question by Ms. Ariel when she provides China with a legitimate answer.

The form of Ms. Ariel's answer is interesting as she addresses China directly about Isaac ("I asked him..."), while referring to Isaac as if he were not there ("...he said 'no.'") This use of the third person singular differs from Isaac's use of the third person plural in line 48 (and possibly Raven's in line 54) in that Isaac is actually present in the classroom, while the "they" in line 48 (and in 54) refers to those who are now in Chuuk. It suggests that "he" and "they" (Isaac and those who are in Chuuk now) are actually one and the same; it also indicates a developing (re)alignment for Ms. Ariel that becomes clarified as the interaction continues. In line 53, after not addressing China's mocking "that's a lie!," the fusion of "he" and "they" is finally made when Ms. Ariel uses the third person plural in reference to Isaac and those in Chuuk while addressing China and the rest of the class ("They make a ring of fire and they dance around."). Raven responds with his own bid to join the teasing with his absurd clarification ("Oh, oh, a ring? So they don't dance inside the fire?"). After Isaac's negative reply, Ms. Ariel again appears to ratify the preceding question as legitimate when she asks in line 57, "inside or outside?" Ms. Ariel's silence on the teasing and her continued querying, now take on a different light with the ratification of questions that were intended to mock Isaac. This becomes even clearer in line 59, after Isaac says "outside," when Ms. Ariel affirms his answer and then laughs quietly. It appears now that Ms. Ariel has aligned herself with Nat and China, perhaps even joined them in the teasing; this clears the way for other students to take part.

The humiliation continues when China directly asks Isaac about the fire, "Do you dance inside?" Isaac is not allowed the chance to reply, as Nat interjects with his joke that he did and died once in the process. China's question, similar to Raven's in line 54, evokes racist imagery of mysterious, fire-walking "savages." Once again, the switch from the third to the second person indicates that "you" (Isaac) is actually "them" (Others). China and Nat have worked together to construct a similar set of dichotomous hierarchies as Ms. Ariel did earlier: their Local *me/us* in-group includes Raven, 618, and the students who have been laughing; this in-group has also been positioned by Ms. Ariel as aligned with hers. It excludes Isaac, the other Chuukese students, and those who have not understood what's been said; they are members of a rearticulated *you/them* out-group: the "real" FOBs. In this interaction, China and Nat have usurped Ms. Ariel's position as "positioner" and claimed it for themselves. They have appropriated her frame and recast it, posed their own kinds of humbling, exoticizing questions, redefined the FOB subject position, and cast Isaac as its icon. In the process, they have (per)formed an alternative identity that indexes a Local rather than a "foreign" affiliation. The differences between these newly (re)defined identities become further articulated as the rest of the interaction plays out. It culminates with another rejoinder from China, again in Pidgin, about Chuukese not working since New Year's is celebrated for a week there, and then 618's strong evaluation, also in Pidgin, of Isaac's answer as a lie.

The questions and teasing continued rather painfully for nearly a minute more, before Ms. Ariel concluded the presentation with a surprisingly abrupt "Okay, I think we should all go there [to Chuuk] for New Year's. Thanks Isaac." This presentation lasted about three times as long as the other students', yet of the time that Isaac was in front of the room, he only actually read two sentences from his paper. The rest of the time was spent contending with interruptions as Nat and China did their identity work with the help of Ms. Ariel, Raven, and other students.

5. Resisting the reproduction of linguisticism

China, Raven, and Nat's efforts to reject being Othered, to rearticulate the FOB subject position, and then relationally define themselves as distinct from it are important forms of resistance. It is resistance in which subjectivity is appropriated in the face of a stigmatizing, institutionally imposed identity category, the reductive, orderly equation of language = country = culture = people is challenged, and the warm superficiality of a trivializing multiculturalism is subverted. It is resistance that highlights agency and the possibility, or rather, the inevitability of (these adolescents') multiple, complex, and frequently incongruous cultural and linguistic affiliations, of ambiguity and hybridity in identity. Yet it is also resistance that ultimately reproduces the very linguisticism constituting the FOB subjectivity that was resisted in the first place. China, Raven, and Nat's redefinition of FOB, at Isaac's expense, signals not a repudiation of the linguisticist hierarchies in Ms. Ariel's class, but their perceived place *within* them. Societal attitudes about immigrants, bi- and multilingualism, and assimilationism that become manifested in educational policies, in turn become manifested in curricula and instruction, which in turn become instantiated in everyday interaction between teachers and students, and among students themselves. As linguisticism is produced at the micro level, it becomes reproduced at the macro; in a perpetual, recursive cycle, this in turn shapes and enables the conditions for its micro level production. Without intervention, ESL students at Tradewinds will, it appears, continue to be subjected to and subjects of linguisticism.

So how to attempt to break the cycle? As Willis (1981) concludes: "The question is less one of bringing in liberation from outside than attempting to drive a wedge between cultural production and reproduction – to preserve the creativity of the articulation of discourses and their radical contents without reproducing the discourses themselves" (p. 64). In other words, how might the radical potential of China, Raven, and Nat's identity work be harnessed to challenge linguisticism itself, rather than used to reinscribe it? Likely starting places for such a "wedge" would be in curriculum and pedagogy, where instead of exoticizing students and reifying romantic notions of their pasts, students could be asked to examine the complex affiliations and associations of their everyday realities. It could take the form of posing problems (Freire 1993) about the status of particular immigrant groups in the US, of ESL students in high school, of linguisticism as a frequently unexamined form of discrimination, of student resistance, of "FOB," or simply "ESL student" as an identity itself. It could formulate activities whereby students could take action through writing, discussion, drama, web-based activities, or direct action to change the conditions that allow linguisticism and other forms of discrimination to prosper. It would not deny the substance of day-to-day life, but would use it as a means for education. What I am suggesting is a critically self-reflexive practice, one which is sensitive to local complexity and situational constraints, and to the implications of what its practitioners seek to do. Following Gore (1992), it is a pedagogy that does not make grand pronouncements about "What we can do for you!" but instead *asks*: "What *can* we do for you?" A pedagogy in which "empowerment is constructed as the exercise of power in an attempt to help others to exercise power" (p. 62; also see Gore, 1993; Hooks 1994). In this, it joins with students in creating a participatory pedagogy that may well begin the process of interruption that is needed.

6. Conclusion

At Tradewinds High School, the cultural production of ESL involved the creation of an FOB subject position as it was relationally defined against an unmarked, idealized “native” English speaker. It involved students who were institutionally categorized as “ESL” being positioned as exoticized Newcomers, a cultural and linguistic Other, by an array of national and local institutional policies, school curriculum and instructional practices, by teachers, and by students themselves. It involved students contesting this positioning and attempting to formulate alternative subjectivities that were consequently defined relationally by a newly articulated FOB subject position, for which a classmate was positioned as its unwitting icon. I have argued that the linguistic hierarchy that was constitutive of the FOB subjectivity was a local instantiation of a societal linguisticism and assimilationism that reifies English monolingualism. Finally, I have suggested some possibilities that might work to interrupt the reproduction of linguisticism, lest students like China, Raven, Nat, Isaac, and their classmates be fated to being “forever FOB.”

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