
School Reform, Hybrid Discourses, and Second Language Literacies

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This article analyzes how school reforms in the United States during the 1990s supported transformative literacy practices in the context of a Hmong-English third grade classroom. Using methods that allow for an analysis of both macro and micro discourses shaping the literacy practices of English language learners, this 2-year study illustrates how combined discourses at the state, district, school, and classroom levels created a discursive space that allowed for the production of hybrid texts that disrupted, if only temporarily, many of the reproductive forces associated with modern schooling. Using a critical perspective of language and social change (e.g., Fairclough, 1992), the author presents an analysis of texts produced and interpreted by participants in a classroom shaped by a statewide school reform initiative known as Senate Bill 1274, California's school restructuring initiative. An analysis of these texts reveals that they afforded language learners opportunities to display multilingual and multicultural identities and to appropriate academic uses of English.

Researchers of modern schooling practices in the United States have convincingly documented how microlevel classroom routines and macrolevel organizational policies have helped to construct social inequities based on race, class, gender, and linguistic differences (e.g., Gutiérrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Harklau, 1994; Olsen, 1997). Harklau, for example, analyzed how organizational structures or *tracks* in schools influenced the language learning experiences of English language learners attending a California high school. She found that English language learners were assigned to low-track classes that were, on the whole, poor language learning environments. Specifically, low-track students had truncated, inauthentic reading material, little practice in composing extended texts beyond the word or sentence level, and few opportunities to participate in self-directed learning activities. As a result, the texts these students learned to

produce could be described as ungrammatical, awkward, and academically deficient.

Olsen (1997) describes a similar set of institutional structures and practices but goes one step further to consider the impact of racial identity on the process of learning English in an urban high school. In a 2-year ethnographic study, Olsen describes how the process of second language acquisition was also a process of "Americanization" in which the task of learning English was also shaped by the task of "becoming racialized into a highly structured social order, where one's position is determined by skin color" and where, as a result, one has "very unequal access to resources, opportunities, and education" (p. 11). Olsen supports this claim by recounting the schooling experiences of a recent immigrant from Brazil named Sandra, who, upon entering high school, expressed anger over the pressure she felt to define herself as either White, Black, or Latino, when these categories ran counter to her understanding of herself as Brazilian. However, over the next 2 years, Sandra's need to fit in led her to resist using more academic varieties of English, thereby placing herself on the racialized social map that Olsen describes as structuring nearly all social interactions at Madison High School (for a Canadian example, see Ibrahim, 1999). The peer group with which Sandra aligned herself and the communicative practices she appropriated belonged to a group of Latina girls Sandra described as "*cholas* . . . the tough girls" (p. 108). Olsen explains this process in the following way:

Some [students] hold fast to their national identities and simply resist identifying with or grouping with others in ethnic/racial categories. They choose marginality as a means of resistance. They choose to remain off the social map, to remain "foreign" and not give in to racial categories. But within two years, very few students followed in this research maintained this stance. (p. 117)

Adopting a poststructural perspective of literacy, schooling, and social (re)production, Gutiérrez, Larson, et al. (1995) and Gutiérrez, Rymes, et al. (1995) illustrate how administrators, teachers, and students attending ethnically diverse schools in Los Angeles participated in the construction of culture-bound "scripts" regarding schooling (Gutiérrez, Larson, et al., p. 414; see also Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997). Using ethnography and critical discourse analysis, their studies show how teacher's monologic, middle-class scripts constrained students' use of physical space, talk, and print in ways that tended to exacerbate racial tensions between ethnically diverse students and their white teachers (Gutiérrez, Larson, et al., p. 414; for a discussion of middle-class literacy practices, see Heath, 1983). In addition, these normative practices

tended to impede the academic literacy learning of diverse students by denying them access to valuable linguistic and cultural resources socially distributed around them. These schooling practices included tracking students by perceived inabilities, arranging desks in ways that limited students' interactions, assigning silent, independent seat work, emphasizing linguistic form over function, and calling for the exclusive use of standard English. Gutierrez, Larson, et al. show how some students, such as a Latina they call Nora, resisted this monologic script by enacting counterscripts of their own but also how these counterscripts did not present a serious challenge to the ways that schools approached literacy instruction. Rather, these counterscripts helped to position students like Nora as remedial learners with "attitude problems" (p. 424). Moreover, the authors maintain that these scripts and counterscripts trivialized the potential that reading and writing could play in student's lives and contributed to Latinos dropping out, or more accurately, being pushed out of high school.

In response to what can be described as a failure of U.S. schools to deliver on the promise of equity through education, researchers committed to social justice have called for changes in how schools are structured and how they approach curriculum and instruction (e.g., Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984). These calls for change began to gain momentum when they were coupled with concerns raised by corporate analysts who argued that schools, like workplaces, must restructure to remain competitive in a rapidly changing social, political, and economic world (Drucker, 1993; Senge, 1991). This approach to organizational change was characterized by the belief that schools, like workplaces, must develop new structures and practices to respond to the transition from old to new forms of capitalism (e.g., Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; New London Group, 1996). This shift entails a weakening of localized, modern, manufacturing-based economies and the rise of more globalized, late-modern, information-based, and technology-driven ones. Influential corporate analysts argued that as part of the transition from the old work order to the new work order, organizations needed to restructure so that Fordist specialization and individual piecework could give way to cross-training and team-based collaboration. These analysts also argued for a flattening of rigid bureaucracies so that collaborative teams could draw on diverse resources, share information, solve problems, and respond to new situations in an immediate and more effective manner (Drucker, 1993; Senge, 1991; for a critique of *new* or *fast capitalism* see Agger, 2004; Gee et al., 1996; as it applies to school reform, see Gebhard, 2004). In sum, the discourses of workplace restructuring during this period, and by extension school restructuring, reflected a belief that economic growth, powerful learning, and an equity agenda were possible to achieve in workplaces and schools if organizational

structures were redesigned to equalize power dynamics, support collaborative action, and capitalize (literally) on diversity.

Given the potential for such an approach to support a social justice agenda, a number of researchers in multicultural education and second language learning explored the power of school restructuring initiatives to support the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (e.g., Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997; Olsen, 1994). Based on school reports, interviews, and field notes, these studies describe how schools restructured and how administrators, teachers, students, and community members experienced these reforms in both positive and negative ways. However, few studies have provided a micro analysis of how reforms have influenced the ways students learned to produce and interpret academic texts. Moreover, few studies have shown how macro- and microdiscursive practices associated with school reforms intersect, take shape, and are appropriated by school-level administrators, teachers, and students in ways that influence academic literacy learning. Such a study is warranted because policy makers, researchers, administrators, teachers, students, and families invest considerable, often very scarce, resources toward improving the education of (their) children. Historically, however, these efforts often have resulted in ironic, unintended consequences (see, e.g., Cohen & Mohl, 1979; Tyack, 1974). Also, the contexts in which these different, yet connected, stakeholders participate are places where beliefs about what counts as quality teaching and learning are contested, negotiated, produced, and reproduced primarily through the stakeholders' uses of talk and print. As such, critical macro and micro analyses of the discourses of school change can make consequential uses of language in educational policy and practices open to reflection and possible change (Sarangi & Candlin, 2003). In an effort to make such a contribution, this study explores how the dynamics among semiotic practices, the formation of school identities, and the development of academic literacies intersected for English language learners in a context of systemic school reform known as Senate Bill 1274 (SB 1274), California's school restructuring initiative. The central questions guiding this investigation are how do students, teachers, and administrators negotiate the discourses of macro school reform policies, and how do the positions they take up through their uses of talk and print influence English language learners' academic literacy development?

To explore these questions, I use a critical perspective of language and social change to conceptually and methodologically connect an analysis of macro discourses shaping educational reforms and micro classroom practices shaping English language learners' academic literacy developments. This perspective maintains that the dialogic processes by which students and teachers jointly produce and interpret oral and written

texts during classroom activities simultaneously reflects, creates, and recreates historically rooted ways of knowing, social relations, and material conditions (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Gee et al., 1996; New London Group, 1996; Pennycook, 2001). Applied to a discussion of school restructuring and classroom literacy practices, this perspective requires that two constructs be defined. First, based on the work of Gee et al., I define *school reforms* such as SB 1274 as an intervention or sociotechnical device that attempts to design new institutional structures and semiotic practices that will create new communities of practices, new ways of being, and new ways of knowing. This definition of reform stands in contrast to other definitions that view educational changes as neutral technologies separate from the study of language practices and the role these practices play in learning and social change. Second, based on the work of Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), I argue that these engineered communities of practice are *hybrid* in that students, teachers, parents, and administrators are positioned physically and discursively in new roles that they take up and remix with other roles in unpredictable ways that may or may not yield more equitable social relations. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) define these hybridized roles and accompanying practices as the movement of discursive practices associated with one particular social domain into another social domain (e.g., the movement of corporate approaches to organization change into the discourse of school reform, the use of varieties of English in classroom interactions, the fusion of different genres to influence a particular audience). However, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) make clear, hybridized language practices are nothing new nor are they by default transformative. Rather, they maintain that the movement or fusion of semiotic practices is inherent in all social uses of language and creates various degrees of durability and instability within and across social boundaries. As such, they maintain that hybrid texts can simultaneously enact resistance and create possibilities for social change; at the same time, they can play a role in creating new forms of hegemony.

METHODOLOGY

In conducting this 2-year study of the microtextual practices of English language learners and their teachers in the context of systemic school reform, I used the tools of qualitative inquiry and critical discourse analysis. The data sources are of various types: field notes from observations of school life as experienced by focal students; transcriptions from audiotaped semistructured interviews with students, parents, teachers, teacher's aides, and administrators; videotaped classroom and

playground activities; and relevant documents. The analysis entailed a series of overlapping phases that involved reviewing field notes, transcripts, and institutional records to see how schools had attempted to restructure and how English language learners were positioned by these reforms. Phase 1 involved conducting a broad content analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) to profile and code the school's activities regarding specific institutional aspects of schooling (e.g., student grouping practices, approaches to curriculum and instruction, opportunities for teacher professional development). Phase 2 focused on analyzing the experiences of focal students. This process entailed reviewing field notes, videotapes, and audiotape transcriptions to code the different types of activities in which English language learners participated. During this phase, I paid close attention to how participation within literacy activities was structured (Cazden, 1988; Dyson, 1993) and how teachers and students appropriated various signs and tools available to them in accomplishing tasks, especially tasks associated with language arts instruction (Wells, 2001). In conducting this analysis, I also identified how speaking position constructed the English language learners' identities as members of classroom communities, and how such identities supported or constrained academic learning opportunities (e.g., Peirce, 1995). I also interviewed teachers and students concerning their text production and interpretation practices using selected texts as prompts for exploring the data further from their perspectives.

Phase 3 involved analyzing the discourses of school restructuring at the institutional level and the discourses of school restructuring as experienced by individual focal students in specific classroom contexts. The purpose of this phase was to determine where patterns of macro institutional discourses and micro classroom discourses intersected and how these intersections reinforced historically rooted school identities for English language learners or provided opportunities for transformation (for a history of immigrant education in the United States, see Cohen & Muhl, 1979; Fass, 1989; Olneck, 1995; Tyack, 1974).

OLIVE GROVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Olive Grove Elementary school is located in northern California in a small town I am calling Hoover.¹ At the time of this study, Hoover had a population of approximately 12,000, most of whom were employed in the fruit-picking and -packing industry or in other low-paying service jobs. These jobs were anchored primarily to the local agribusiness and

¹ All names used in the data analysis are pseudonyms.

the strip malls, motels, and fast-food restaurants that lined a major freeway leading to larger urban centers to the north and south. Because this economic base was seasonal and low paying, the unemployment rate for the area was around 17% and the average worker earned about \$8.00 an hour (1990 census). Hoover's economy was not greatly affected by the enormous wealth that the technological boom generated in California during the 1990s. Moreover, during this same period, Hoover experienced a rapid demographic shift. Namely, Hmong families began immigrating to Hoover from refugee camps in Thailand as part of a resettlement project sponsored by a local church and the federal government. The strengths of this growth rate as well as the weaknesses of the local economy are reflected in Olive Grove's demographic data. For example, in 1990 only 1% of the nearly 550 students attending Olive Grove were designated as Asian. Two years later, this number had grown to almost 30%, a percentage composed almost entirely of Hmong and Mien speakers. Simultaneously, the percentage of all students who were eligible for a free or reduced-cost lunch grew to 81%.

To respond to these changing demographics, the school principal, together with a team of teachers and representatives from the school district, applied for additional funds made available by the passage of Senate Bill 1274. This bill provided 144 schools with \$125 million of additional funding between 1992 and 1997. As one of these 144 schools, Olive Grove was awarded \$463,000 to make bold changes in how it approached educating the students it served (Little & Dorph, 1998). The nature of these changes will be discussed in the following section.

DATA ANALYSIS

Institutional Context: The Hybrid Discourses of the New Work Order and School Reform

Analysis of the formation of Senate Bill 1274 and how it was enacted at Olive Grove Elementary School shows the degree to which the discourses of the new work order hybridized with the discourses of school reform. Senate Bill 1274 was initiated by the California Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers from 90 of California's largest companies. Motivated by the belief that a strong economy is contingent on a strong public education system, the roundtable asked the educational research firm Berman & Weiler Associates to analyze the condition of elementary and secondary education in California and recommend reforms. By 1990, the California Business Roundtable, together with Berman & Weiler Associates, Senator Gary Hart, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, the California Achievement Council, and the then

state superintendent of schools, Bill Honig, had drafted and won support for an ambitious school reform package. This diverse group, representing different constituencies and beliefs about the purposes of schooling, participated in crafting an invitation to schools across the state to submit "radical" proposals for "rethinking" the way they "do business for all students." Specifically, the authors of Senate Bill 1274 wrote the following:

SB 1274 invites educators to consider radical changes in the way schools and districts operate in order to create a better environment for engaging all students in powerful learning experiences and in a rich, meaning-centered curriculum. . . . [SB 1274] is not meant to add another layer of bureaucracy to already existing school and district structures, systems and programs. Rather, it is intended to provide an opportunity to re-think the way we do business, remove the constraints that get in the way, keep the focus on student learning, empower professionals to use their best judgment in figuring out what works, and then hold them accountable for results. (California Department of Education, 1991)

In their analysis of the implications of this call for proposals in nine funded schools, Little and Dorph (1998) report that "the positive effects of restructuring were felt unevenly among students, with higher achievers and native English speakers more likely to reap the benefits and avoid the pitfalls" (p. 10). In my analyses of three of these schools (Gebhard, 2000, 2004), I argue that the schools' inability to address issues of equity could be attributed, in part, to difference-blind discourses that made seeing inequities related to race, class, gender, and language difficult to see and, therefore, to address (e.g., teachers and principals emphasizing the importance of treating everyone the same; for a discussion of color-blind discourses in schools, see Pollack, 2004). An analysis of the discursive practices at work at Olive Grove, however, reveals a striking comparison. Namely, teachers and administrators at Olive Grove explicitly targeted issues related to language and class as matters they wanted to address in applying for SB 1274 funds. For example, a longtime teacher and member of the school restructuring team said,

I think it's important for you to know, for your study to know, the history of where we are. We were pretty well traditional, [but we] felt a real, real need to change. Our population was changing rapidly, not only in terms of a huge influx of immigrants, largely Asian immigrants with no English background, we had that. But this neighborhood area that we take in is a very low economic area. Our welfare rate then was high, it's much higher now. . . . With that shifting of population . . . we needed to make some drastic changes. We were not reaching our children. So we applied for the 1274 grant to change the whole business of education. (Chris Darvy, teacher, Grades 1 and 2)

In response to these dramatic changes in the school's demographic profile, several teachers, the principal, the school psychologist, and a member of the local school board began investigating alternative ways of approaching "the business" of schooling. These alternative ways reverberate with the salient characteristics of the new work order. Specifically, the restructuring initiative the team presented to their colleagues and to the state-funding agency centered on four reforms:

- Grouping students in multi-age classrooms (kindergarten, Grades 1–2, and Grades 3–6)
- Integrating English language learners into multi-age classrooms taught by teachers with both elementary and ESL teaching credentials
- Implementing a collaborative, project-based approach to teaching and learning
- Implementing programs designed to develop a school culture that respects differences and supports students' use of their home languages

Certainly, these reforms were not necessarily new because they have roots in the progressive era (e.g., project-based learning). However, in the context of changes taking place in the organization of work in the 1990s, as opposed to the 1920s, these reforms signal different meanings than the ones promoted by Dewey and his followers. Specifically, these reforms reflect a belief that teachers and students, like managers and workers, can accomplish more when they participate in activities marked by a flattening of hierarchical structures in which authority is decentered and expertise is distributed through collaborative action (e.g., Gee et al., 1996). Olive Grove's principal, Martin Fonsworth, voiced this belief emphatically when he said, "I was never one who believed that all fifth-graders wear size eight shoes," and "we have to get out of thinking of students as independent contractors. Get them to work together. Get kids out of rows and into cooperative groups." In stating his perspective, Fonsworth, similar to his corporate counterparts, rejected the modern, manufacturing-based approach to organizing work and learning characterized by standardization, top-down control, specialization, and individual piecework. Rather, he maintained that teachers and learners, like managers and workers in the new work order, can accomplish more when authority and expertise are shared through interdisciplinary collaboration.

Classroom Context: The Hybrid Roles and Discourses in Mrs. Rathom's Room

To analyze the implications of Olive Grove's restructuring initiative for English language learners in a specific local context, I worked closely with Martha Rathom, a white, middle-class woman certified in elementary education and teaching English as a second language. At the time of the study, Mrs. Rathom (as she was known to her students) had 14 years of experience in a number of different elementary schools and had applied to teach at Olive Grove because she wanted to teach in a multi-age, multilingual context where she would have greater access to using technology in designing an interdisciplinary curriculum. In this regard, it is important to note that the state's restructuring initiative did not necessarily change Mrs. Rathom's approach to teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. Rather, SB 1274, as shaped by the principal and other school leaders, provided her with an opportunity to experiment with beliefs about teaching and learning that she already held strongly.

The diversity of the students assigned to Mrs. Rathom's room, however, does illustrate the boldness of Olive Grove's restructuring plan. She had 28 students assigned to her room, with an even distribution of Hmong and English-only students,² as well as a nearly even distribution of boys and girls. Five of these students were third-graders, five were fourth graders, nine were fifth graders, and the remaining nine were sixth graders. In addition, two students were designated as having learning disabilities and another two were enrolled in a program run by the school psychologist. Interestingly, five sibling pairs were enrolled in the class, further adding to what Mrs. Rathom called the family-like, one-room-schoolhouse quality of classrooms at Olive Grove.

In line with Mrs. Rathom's reasons for applying for a position at Olive Grove, she arranged the 28 students in her class in heterogeneous groups with respect to their age, gender, and language backgrounds. She assigned them projects that they were to complete in collaboration with each other, with her, with the bilingual aide, and/or with a variety of visitors to the classroom. In giving students direction, and in supporting them in completing projects, Mrs. Rathom used a variety of discourse options ranging from more fixed, teacher-oriented practices such as lecturing, testing, and engaging students in typical classroom routines such as the initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) sequence to more negotiated, informal, group-oriented kinds of interaction (Kramsch, 1985).

² Administrators, teachers, and students used the terms *English-only* and *Hmong* to identify one another.

To help the school achieve its goal of creating a climate that respected differences, Olive Grove's restructuring plan mandated that all teachers implement a daily class meeting or community circle after lunch, a time when teachers believed conflicts between students tended to surface. Community circle was a highly scripted event in which students seated in a circle could choose between five gambits: thanking, praising, passing, raising a concern, or responding to a concern. Teachers mediated turns at talk by hybridizing a scripted therapeutic discourse with classroom discourse (e.g., IRE) and fusing a therapist role with a teacher role (e.g., "Do you hear what so-and-so said and how that made him or her feel?" or "How would you like to respond to so-and-so's concern?"). For example, on one typical occasion, an English-only boy raised a concern with two Hmong girls who sat at his table. His complaint was that they were speaking Hmong all the time, and he did not know what they were talking about. He was angry because he was sure they were talking about him. Mrs. Rathom asked the Hmong girls how they would like to respond. The girls indicated that they were not talking about him, and, with the teacher's assistance, added that they needed to speak Hmong to help each other get their work done. The teacher concluded this exchange by reinforcing the girls' right to speak in Hmong but added that they should "check in" with the boy to offer and get his help, and, in doing so, form a better working group.³

As an analysis of interview data reveals, Mrs. Rathom discussed this event in a way that re-enacted the kinds of turns at talk that took place.⁴ In doing so, she adopted three different voices: the voice of the teacher-therapist, the voice of Hmong students, and the voice of English-only students. Her use of three voices shows how she attempted to teach students how to "confront each other" so that they could understand each other's perspectives and negotiate differences. In this example, she asked English-speaking students to think about how they might be acting "paranoid," and Hmong-speaking students to think about how English-only students might feel "uncomfortable" if they do not understand what is being said in their group. Mrs. Rathom adopted the voice of Hmong students and positioned herself as a Hmong student when she said, "We need to speak English, so they can understand." And last, she spoke for English-only students when she said, "They go, 'Oh, of course they want to speak Hmong.'" She said,

³ Hmong and English-only students maintained Hmong speaking rights in the context of playing a Hmong jump-rope game on the playground, during Hmong-bilingual instruction when English-only students participated in nonratified ways (e.g., practicing Hmong tones instead of doing their assigned work); and when English-only students asked Hmong students how to say taboo words.

⁴ I did not audio- or videotape community circle meetings because of the sensitive nature of the topics students sometimes raised.

It [Hmong versus English language use] comes up and we've had to talk about issues like, "Well, I think they're talking about me." "Well, what makes you think they're talking about you?" "Well, they looked at me and they giggled." I say, oh, okay. We talk about being paranoid in that situation, [as well as how] that could be uncomfortable [to non-Hmong speakers] and asking the Hmong students to think about that. We're into confronting each other, so if you have an issue that concerns this person over here, then what language do you need to be speaking? We need to speak English, so they can understand. I mean we've had to address those issues. They come up every year and we do have to talk about them, and we have to work them out and I have to point out to those English-speaking kids, golly, what if you went to a country and they said you can't speak English and it's the only language you know. Then it clicks for them. They go, "Oh, of course they want to speak Hmong." (Interview with Martha Rathom, teacher, Grades 3-6)

While supporting Mrs. Rathom's goals regarding issues of respect and fairness, students used the discourse of community circle to further their own social agendas. Specifically, students regularly appropriated the therapeutic discourse of community circle to make their peer group boundaries highly visible. For example, students, including English language learners, seldom passed but used this script to thank those who sat with them at lunch or played with them at recess. These thank-yous, in turn, were often taken up (or not) and returned (or not) by the recipient when it was his or her turn to take the floor. This marking off of one's social group through ritualized thank-yous and praises was regularly practiced by Pa Hua, the focal student whose literacy practices are the focus of this article. It is interesting that, like many of the students in this class, the social group to which she oriented herself and by which she was accepted was heterogeneous in age and linguistic background, but less so in gender. For example, through the discourse of community circle, Pa Hua marked herself, and was marked, as belonging to a group of three older girls, one of whom was a fifth-grade Hmong speaker and two of whom were sixth-grade English-only speakers.

Hybridity and Academic Literacies: Friend, Teacher, Student

At the beginning of this study, Pa Hua was in third grade. Mrs. Rathom described her as very competent in speaking English but as one of the less proficient readers and writers in the class. For example, on the California Test of Basic Skills, Pa Hua scored a 4% in reading and 1% in math despite receiving high scores of 4 and 5 (out of 5) on the widely used Student Oral Language Observation Matrix. However, Pa Hua's membership in a peer group that included older, more proficient users

of academic English, in conjunction with the fluid roles all students assumed within Mrs. Rathom's class, supported her in producing academic literacies in English. As shown in the following interaction, students were working on essays about the school's restructuring efforts for an upcoming event at the town hall. As was typical of writing-workshop routines in Mrs. Rathom's class, students elected to work in small, self-selected groups as Mrs. Rathom and the bilingual aide circulated through the room providing assistance as needed in English and Hmong.

On this morning, as was common, Pa Hua left her assigned seat and elected to sit next to Sandra, a sixth-grade English-only Latina with whom she often socialized during free time and with whom she exchanged praises and thank-yous during community circle. As the following transcript reveals, Pa Hua and Sandra hybridize the roles of friend, student, and teacher in ways that provide Pa Hua access to and instruction in academic ways of using English. In this interaction, Pa Hua was finished with her "mind map," but she was unsure about what to do next with her piece. In an effort to move forward, she actively used turns at talk to position her friend Sandra as a teacher when Mrs. Rathom was helping another student:

1. *Pa Hua:* I'm done! [*Refers to finishing her draft. Yawns. Claps her hands up and down on her legs. Scratches her head. Turns to Mrs. Rathom, who is working with a student at an adjacent table.*] Mrs. Rathom, I'm already done.
2. *Mrs. Rathom:* Pa Hua, not right now. I'm working with Monica still.
3. *Pa Hua:* Okay. [*Plays with pencil. Pushes it up her sleeve and then puts it between her thumb and forefinger. Tries to write and then pulls it out. Looks to the ceiling with the pencil pressed to her lips.*] Now what should I write about? [*Looks at Sandra.*]
4. *Sandra:* [*Keeping her attention on her paper.*] What have you got?
5. *Pa Hua:* I wrote one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. [*Counts her paragraphs.*]
6. *Sandra:* [*As she continues to work.*] You only have to write about three.
7. *Pa Hua:* (*Addressing Sandra.*) I want to. I like to write more and more. I'm write more and more and more until my all paper is all gone. Then I stop.
8. *Steve:* [*Sitting next to Pa Hua. He says something indecipherable. He makes some kind of derogatory comment about why her paper is so long.*]
9. *Sandra:* [*Addressing the boy.*] She's not writing very much. [*Addressing Pa Hua and pointing to her paper.*] You have huge paragraphs. [*Meaning that Pa Hua's writing is big and that each paragraph only has a few sentences. Sandra resumes her work.*]
10. *Steve:* It's not a huge paragraph.

11. *Pa Hua:* [*Glares at him.*] I'm not having fun. [*Sandra is still working on her own paper as Pa Hua watches her and drums her pencil on the desk.*]
12. *Mrs. Rathom:* [*Approaching Pa Hua.*] A lot of people are waiting, not just you, so I have to work with Charles. [*Pa Hua, following the classroom procedures, goes to the front of the room where there is an overhead projector. On the projector there are two columns, one marked responding and one marked editing. The students are to indicate what they need help with. Mrs. Rathom uses this to keep track of who she will work with next. Pa Hua puts her name down in the responding column.*]
13. *Pa Hua:* [*Returns to her chair. Lets out a heavy sigh.*] I don't know what to write about. [*Someone off camera says something to her and she smiles.*]
14. *Sandra:* [*Still focused on her own work.*] What about your mind map?
15. *Pa Hua:* I already did my mind map. [*Pulls out her folder.*] What do you blah blah. [*Sandra is still focused on her paper.*] Ohhh. I get it. I should write about what I like about Olive Grove Elementary School! [*Pa Hua starts writing. Sandra watches her. Pa Hua reads what she has just written.*] Olive Grove Elementary School. [*Smiles at Sandra.*]
16. *Sandra:* Do you want to read what I have?
17. *Pa Hua:* Yeah. [*Smiles and nods her head enthusiastically. Reaches for Sandra's paper.*]
18. *Sandra:* This is the beginning part. [*Sandra helps get the pages in order and points to the first sentence.*]
19. *Pa Hua:* [*Pa Hua starts reading in a halting, word-by-word manner. Both Pa Hua and Sandra use their pencils to point to each word as Pa Hua reads.*] "Computers. What I like about comp—"
20. *Sandra:* Computer—
21. *Pa Hua:* [*She continues reading Sandra's paper.*] "Computer learning at Olive Grove Elementary School. I like the computers because they help me learn a lot. I think, I think it is real—"
22. *Sandra:* Really—
23. *Pa Hua:* "Really—"
24. *Sandra:* Important—
25. *Pa Hua:* "Important for someone to have a computer. If you have one the nee—neatest things about it is that you can use and hook your computer to the Internet and talk to people all around the world. The computer helps me a lot. They help me with math—"
26. *Sandra:* Science.
27. *Pa Hua:* "Science, and all kinds more [*indecipherable*] and [*indecipherable*]. I like to print in color because it will look real good to me be—[*Sandra crosses something out.*] That my par—"
28. *Sandra:* Parents.
29. *Pa Hua:* "Parents, teachers, and friends. I like community circle because it [*Pa Hua straightens the paper and turns it over.*]

- makes that your nice. You're ARE, you're nice and friendly. I like to print in color because it makes that you get As and Bs all the thing—time. Webster: I like Olive Grove Elementary School field trip to Webster because it, I, I am a—”
30. *Sandra*: Sixth.
31. *Pa Hua*: “Sixth grade and I got to go I—” [*Pa Hua looks at Sandra.*] Uh what? [*Continues reading.*] “I thought it was fun here and there but I have some—”
32. *Mrs. Rathom*: [*Addressing Sandra.*] Thanks for helping Pa Hua.
33. *Pa Hua*: “I would—[*Sandra crosses something out. Pa Hua rubs her eyes. Next few sentences are indecipherable.*] If I have a chance, I would like to go again. [*Sandra takes out the next page.*] What a different—[*Sandra crosses something out and Pa Hua repeats the motion with her own pencil.*] What can make Olive Grove Elementary School better? I think that Olive Grove Elementary School needs to have all the same grades together. The—”
34. *Sandra*: Reason.
35. *Pa Hua*: “Reason I think that is because I don't think that I'm learning as much as I should. [*Sandra turns the page and crosses something out. Pa Hua crosses it out as well.*] I am I think that because it is hard for me to—”
36. *Sandra*: Concentrate.
37. *Pa Hua*: “Concentrate on my work when I am in a different group than I others because if I don't get help from the teacher then what is the person—”
38. *Sandra*: Point—
39. *Pa Hua*: “Point of spending time at school.”

As this transcript reveals, Pa Hua was able to position or draft her friend Sandra into assuming the role of a teacher by using the space of the classroom, turns at talk, and gestures. This strategy was evident when Pa Hua left her assigned seat to work with Sandra, in Line 3 when Pa Hua addressed herself by saying, “Now what should I write about?” but directed her gaze at Sandra, and when Pa Hua sighed heavily and said to herself, “I don't know what to write about,” in Line 13. In Line 14, Sandra partially took up the invitation to assume a teacher role when she asked a procedural scaffolding question, “What about your mind map?” In her next turn at talk, however, Sandra began to transition from a friend role into a teacher role when she said, “Do you want to read what I have?” (Line 16). This shift is apparent in Lines 18–19, when Sandra adopted a teacher-like posture by placing the paper between herself and Pa Hua, guiding the pace and focus of Pa Hua's reading with her pencil, and providing corrections to Pa Hua's reading of her text. As a result of Sandra's taking up this teacher role and associated language practices, Pa Hua became firmly anchored in an academic language learner role.

As discussed in reviewing the literature on English language learners and classroom discourse, other studies have illustrated how difficult it is for students institutionally designated as limited English proficient (LEP), particularly those who are also classified as low performing, to gain access to interactional practices and accompanying roles that support academic literacy practices (Gebhard 2000, 2004; Gutiérrez et al., 1997; Gutiérrez, Larson, et al., 1995; Gutiérrez, Rymes, et al., 1995; Harklue, 1994; Little & Dorph, 1998; Olsen, 1994, 1997).

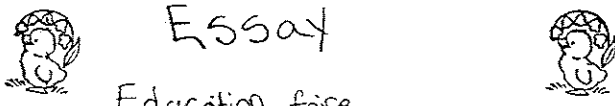
More important is that the co-construction of roles through turns at talk created interactions that supported academic literacy development. Namely, Pa Hua's uses of oral and written language were jointly supported as the two students both attended to aspects of Sandra's text at the morphological level (Lines 21–23, with the joint construction of the word *really*) and the syntactic level (Line 29, with Pa Hua's miscue and self-repair of the contraction *you're*). Sandra's piece also provided Pa Hua with a model of how to construct paragraphs with an expected single focus (e.g., the school's use of technology), how to approach the genre of essay writing (e.g., having a "beginning part" in Line 18), and how to use this genre to critique school practices (e.g., "I think that Olive Grove Elementary School needs to have all the same grades together" in Lines 33–35).

The degree to which Pa Hua appropriated aspects of Sandra's texts in writing her own essay is evident in an analysis of Pa Hua's next draft (see Figure 1). She appropriated the regularly occurring syntactic pattern of a noun phrase followed by a dependent adverbial clause found in Sandra's essay. For example, Sandra's piece contained several instances of the pattern "I like X because Y" (e.g., "I like computers because they help me learn a lot," and "I like to print in color because it will look real good to me"). This same structure appears in one third of Pa Hua's sentences and is correctly punctuated in all but one instance (e.g., "I like computer because you learn how to type," "I like my friends because they like to be my friends and because they play with me at recess [sic]," "I would like to learn about D.A.R.E. because it help you learn about drugs," and "I like assemblies because sometimes it is funny too"). Additionally, her draft shows evidence, in the words of Mrs. Rathom, that she has learned the concept of *essay* and the concept of *paragraphing*, given that all of the sentences center on the assignment (e.g., "what I like about Olive Grove Elementary School") and each cluster of sentences is united under a heading (e.g., "Education faire" [sic], "Computer," "Choirs," "Friends," "D.A.R.E.," and "Assemblies"). Moreover, although Pa Hua never publicly criticized teachers or the school, the last few lines of this transcript show students being apprenticed to literacy practices that legitimate their right to challenge school policies in writing in-

tended to be read by not just their teacher, but also by the wider community.

It is interesting and ironic that these lines also signal a problem with multi-age grading within a Grade 3-6 configuration, as enacted in this

FIGURE 1
Pa Hua's Draft



Essay

Education faire

1. When we go to the Education faire ^{4/11/96}
we have to show our work to
our parents. Maybe they will
be happy to us.

2. Computer
I like computer because you
learn how to type on
manid teaches tilping.
I hope you like this.

Choirs
On Mondays I go to choirs. I
learn songs like we got musi'c!
meshmy I los my homework!!
I like

(continued on p. 204)

Friends
 I like my friends because
 they like to be my friends,
 and because they play with me
 at recesses.

D.A.R.E.

I would like to learn ^{about} D.A.R.E.
 because it help you learn about
 drugs and it helps you keep off of
 drugs. Keep kids off drugs drug

Assemblies

I like Assemblies because
 sometime it is funny too
 But sometime it is not fun
 funny Because its sad.

context. Namely, as Sandra wrote about not being able to “concentrate” and “learn” in a mixed-age class, she was interrupted by a peer who wanted her help. As Sandra’s words attest, more proficient, socially mature students often were drafted into roles that pulled them away

from their own work. This kind of adultification of students into teacher roles is something Pa Hua may experience as she advances to higher grades. If Pa Hua is frequently called on to perform teacher-like responsibilities, it is possible that her own academic progress, like Sandra's, may suffer, particularly as she makes the transition to middle school where students are required to have a deeper knowledge of a range of content-specific academic genres (see Kirtman, 2000, for a discussion of the lack of academic expectations and support for sixth graders at Olive Grove).

In critiquing this aspect of the school restructuring discourses, it is evident that hybrid texts produced in Mrs. Rathom's class simultaneously created possibilities for academic literacy learning as well as new forms of marginalization. Specifically, the data show the apparent limitations of the commonsense belief that students naturally develop their own literacy abilities when they teach others. In making this comment, I am not suggesting that students were not developing other valuable abilities (e.g., a sense of leadership and responsibility). Rather, I am suggesting that the adultification of students, particularly girls and older bilingual students, into teaching roles revealed a new kind of inequity that manifested in a kind of literacy ceiling for very capable students in this class. This conclusion is based on a review of the texts produced by other sixth-grade students like Sandra in the class (see Little & Dorph, 1998). For example, note that Sandra's text, as read by Pa Hua, lacked specific information and was highly repetitive. Moreover, during this full day of observation, Sandra did not sign up for a writing conference with Mrs. Rathom nor did she work with a more proficient peer who could model how to write a more grade-appropriate persuasive essay. Similarly, as the following transcript shows, Pa Hua's brother, Koo, a highly proficient fifth-grade Hmong student, spent this morning (and many like it) working with two younger Hmong boys helping them spell relatively elementary words in a rather laborious manner:

- Koo: [In a dictation fashion.] "I like this."
Yia: "This"? "This" spell *li cas*? ("This"? How do you spell "this"?)
Koo: "T," "H"—
Yia: *Txhob mus ceev mas!* (Don't go so fast!)
Blong: *Koj mus ceev ua luaj li kuv tsis paub as.* (You go so fast that I don't know [what to write].)

In sum, the multiple roles in and out of which students moved during their school day appeared to support younger, less English-proficient students in acquiring academic literacies in English. These hybrid, friend-student-teacher roles, however, tended to position more proficient students in what could be characterized as zones of current (as opposed to proximal) development vis-à-vis academic literacy because

few more skilled others were available to apprentice students like Sandra and Koo to more academic ways of producing texts (Vygotsky, 1978). In this regard, the data suggest that cooperative students like Sandra and Koo (and potentially Pa Hua) were drafted into adult roles left vacant as teachers attempted to manage the overwhelming number of other roles assigned to them by the demands of school reform. At Olive Grove specifically, as the school restructuring initiative attempted to redistribute expertise and authority, Mrs. Rathom assumed the roles of teacher as manager, therapist, computer specialist, and political activist. Similar to Hargreave's analysis of the implications of school restructuring on teacher work, reforms at Olive Grove intensified Mrs. Rathom's work, requiring her to meet the impossible demands of being all things to all stakeholders (Hargreaves, 1994). This comment is in no way a criticism of Mrs. Rathom, whom I would describe as a highly gifted professional. Rather, this comment is a critique of school reform initiatives that push teachers into too many, often conflicting, roles and out of their primary role of designing and reflecting on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Moreover, the allocation of nearly \$500,000 during the funding period did little to relieve this tension. In making this remark, I am not suggesting that creating multi-age classrooms, or any reform for that matter, cannot serve students well or that the additional funding for the school's reform project would not have been useful. Rather, I am suggesting that teachers and administrators involved in school reform need opportunities and support for closely analyzing the meaning of reforms in their local communities and for making locally appropriate modification to reforms based on informed microanalyses of classroom interactions. In this regard, had the insight from this study been available to Mrs. Rathom at the time of data collection, it might have been possible for other adults in the room to work with older students to apprentice them to more age-appropriate literacy practices (e.g., the bilingual aide, university student teachers, high school interns, researchers like me).

CONCLUSION

Collectively, the appropriation and fusion of micro and macro discourses associated with California's school restructuring initiative as enacted in Mrs. Rathom's class created a hybrid discursive space that allowed Hmong and English-only students room to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences in ways that fostered and legitimated the display of multicultural identities and supported the acquisition of academic literacy practices, particularly for less proficient English language learners. As such, the reforms enacted in Mrs. Rathom's class disrupted many

of the social reproduction forces associated with modern schooling. The data indicate that English language learners participated in these practices because Mrs. Rathom and the school's administrators rejected monolingual, individualistic, piecemeal approaches to teaching academic literacy in favor of more late-modern ways of language learning that can be described as distributed, interdisciplinary, and multivoiced.

In presenting these findings, my goal has been to make visible the ways in which multiple discourses associated with school reform and academic literacy development coalesced and helped create a classroom that could work productively for English language learners. The data suggest that the synergistic agency of the individuals involved in California's school restructuring initiative at Olive Grove aligned practices that were powerful and stable during the funding period. Similar to Solsken et al.'s (2000) study of transformative language practices, a counterdiscourse to modern schooling practices could be established in Mrs. Rathom's classroom because of the collective action taken by individuals who used their institutional authority to serve aligned ideologies. For example, the ideologies and actions taken by some, but not all, of the policy makers who made Senate Bill 1274 possible (e.g., the Mexican American Defense League, Senator Gary Hart, and California's superintendent of education, Bill Honig) were aligned with the ideologies and practices of local school administrators at Olive Grove (e.g., Principal Martin Fonsworth) and particular classroom teachers who elected to work at this school (e.g., Martha Rathom). As a postscript, this synergistic configuration of compatible ideologies and practices appears to have succumbed to a set of contradictory ideologies that began to take hold in California and elsewhere in the United States by the end of the 1990s (e.g., the passage of anti-immigration, -bilingual, and -affirmative action ballot initiatives). After the study, Mrs. Rathom stated that "any lingering signs" of school restructuring at Olive Grove are "nonexistent" because of California's push for state standards and antibilingual mandates.

Although the transformative space created in Mrs. Rathom's classroom was apparently fragile, the findings from this study have implications for critical studies of language learning and school change. Namely, they foreground a need to develop data collection and analysis methods that support teachers and policy makers in analyzing how macro and micro schooling practices intersect and support and/or constrain the academic literacy practices of English language learners over time. Such methods include involving administrators, teachers, community members, and students in analyzing classroom literacy practices (e.g., video clips, transcripts, and student writing samples) to ground multiple and partial perspectives of student learning and to support dialogue, reflection, and learning within school systems (see Roberts, 2003, and Sarangi &

Candlin, 2003, for a discussion of the need to involve participants in data analysis in applied linguistics). This recommendation signals a shortcoming of this study. Namely, the design of this investigation did not significantly involve participants in ongoing analysis of the data as a way of contributing to the school's reform agenda (e.g., awareness of the literacy ceiling that hindered more proficient students). Second, poststudy exchanges with Mrs. Rathom suggest that more longitudinal studies of the implications of school reform are needed to capture the connections among school practices, second language learning, and issues of social change. These recommendations might strike some readers as unrealistic because they are extremely costly or as questionable because they deliberately blur boundaries among researchers, teachers, administrators, and policy makers. However, these recommendations are important to consider because school reforms are provoking a greater awareness of how macro policy contexts are influencing micro uses of language in classrooms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This investigation was funded by the Language Minorities Research Institute and was part of a series of studies of school reform conducted under the direction of Judith Warren Little that were funded by the Stuart Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation. In addition, I am grateful for the careful work of Tong Kong of the University of California, Berkeley. Mr. Kong worked with me on transcribing and translating audio and video classroom data.

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