



# **BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

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**Facultad de Lenguas**

**Thesis title:**

**The influence of classroom culture on  
teaching and learning within EFL lessons: A  
multimodal critical classroom discourse  
analysis**

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## **Abstract**

The current research project presents a series of significant phases within two English as a foreign language (EFL) lessons in different institutional settings. The study involves a multimodal critical classroom discourse analysis of the teaching and learning practices within the lessons. Ethnographic techniques were utilized in order to capture classroom life within authentic instructional spaces (Jewitt, 2008, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Norris, 2004; Prabhu, 1992; Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Wysocki, 2011).

The aim of this study is to explore how classroom culture is constructed and maintained. In addition, the analyses intend to reveal the impact that EFL classroom culture and its social dimension has on teaching and learning dynamics through the selection and employment of different communicative modes. As such, the manner in which teachers and learners engage with and respond to embodied and disembodied modes such as furniture arrangements is examined. In sum, all of the factors involved within an educational space may facilitate or constrain students' opportunities for learning, which are part of classroom life but also required to successfully participate within the community of practice that participants create over time (Gee & Green, 1998; Green & Weade, 1990).

## Dedications

This work, the product of a graduate program which awards a much wanted Master's title, is first dedicated to the person who raised me on her own, who taught me to be strong, who gave me love and devoted her entire life to my wellbeing. My Mother, whose goal was always and still is to protect me and be with me at every moment. Thank you testellas!

This thesis would not had been possible without the help and support from Michael T. Witten. A very special person, who has been my mentor, tutor, sensei, friend and biggest academic influence. Thank you very much for your patience, valuable time, and advice.

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Finally, I also dedicate this thesis to my cousin Nara, who is the closest I have to a sister. Thank you for always being there as my friend, my confidant and as family.

*“Wer fliegen lernen will, muss zuerst mit beiden Beinen auf dem Boden stehen”*

(Friedrich Nietzsche)

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# **The influence of classroom culture on teaching and learning within EFL lessons: A multimodal critical classroom discourse analysis**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The current research is focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom culture. Teachers as well as students engage in various types of interactions under specific circumstances during each lesson when certain plans and/or methods are employed in class. However, there is a socio-cultural situation constantly transforming the classroom context, which is often in tension with the teachers' materials and/or the lesson plan. In other words, the EFL classroom environment is a social situation that provides various structures for participation among the members within it. These participants assume different institutional roles, for particular purposes and certain periods of time (Green & Weade, 1990). In addition, participants enroll in a type of social contract, which gives them certain rights and obligations as they construct the classroom culture through their interactions with each other (Prabhu, 1992).

## **1.1 Significance of the study**

The present research addresses the different learning affordances and constraints within EFL classroom settings (furniture arrangements, administrative staff, curriculum, materials and more), as well as the power relations established during the interaction among the participants involved. Thus, this study intends to: 1) explore the impact that the EFL classroom culture has on teaching and learning practices and 2) provide a perspective where the teaching and learning of a second language (L2) can be conceptualized as an enduring yet dynamic social interaction within a cultural based framework. This research is

meant to raise awareness among teachers, researchers and learners (or any other participant indirectly influencing the lesson's social interaction) as they recognize how classroom life is constructed and better understand its dynamics.

This investigation will adopt qualitative research (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) procedures as it explores two distinct research settings in tertiary education institutions (see section 1.3 below for further details). It will be utilizing ethnographic techniques such as extensive classroom observation, field notes and video footage with accompanying transcripts (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Finally, since this study presents ethnographic features, the researcher will be considered as a participant within the dynamics of the setting as well.

## **1.2 The Research Niche**

This section describes how the current study fits into similar lines of research that scholars have conducted in the past. First, it is important to point out that previous studies have demonstrated that classroom culture, power negotiation and ritualization can interfere or facilitate language learning; thus, various educational dynamics may be modified or improved to provide more learning opportunities to L2 students (see Jewitt, 2008). The current study draws on past research findings and methodological techniques in order to achieve its aims (Green & Weade, 1990; Jewitt, 2008; Prabhu, 1992). To address the construction of classroom culture, the use of critical discourse analysis will be essential to analyze the participants' interaction (Fairclough, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 1999). Also, findings from studies on identity, multiple literacies and intertextuality will support the analysis of how participants engage in 'secondary discourses' when using their own

‘semiotic styles’ (attitudes, values and personality traits) and the relationships established through these styles within social communities or institutions (Gee, 1998; Lemke, 2004; van Leeuwen, 2009). Finally, multimodality will provide the basis to analyze the characteristics of the different settings presented (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This focus will allow the study of the participants’ behavioral prompts through the analysis of gesture, gaze, posture, the use of artifacts in the classroom as well as the participants’ identity kits (Goffman, 1981; Green & Weade, 1990; Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

### **1.3 Setting of the study**

The data for the current study was collected at two public institutions that offer tertiary level teacher education programs. Both institutions can be characterized by different types of infrastructure, students and ‘traditional’ versus ‘progressive’ institutional policies regarding their educational philosophy (see Chapter 3 for further detail). A brief overview of each institution is provided below.

The first institution is called Benemérito Instituto Normal del Estado (BINE). This institution has a teacher education program to train teachers to work in the public school system (K-12). Almost all teachers who work in the Public K-12 school system in Mexico must graduate from this type institution. The BINE has recently begun to include EFL courses into their curriculum, and it was within one of these classroom lessons that data was gathered for the current research.

The second institution is called the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP). This institution is the state university in Puebla, Mexico. The BUAP is a complete university offering a wide variety of majors. Within the BUAP, the Facultad de Lenguas

offers a BA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. As such, the BA focuses on teacher development in EFL. It is within an EFL lesson of the BA program where data was collected for the current study.

#### **1.4 Aims of the research**

This study aims to explain how classroom culture supports or constrains the participants' opportunities for learning by focusing on multimodal resources. In addition, it aims to discuss how roles within the classroom setting are negotiated and established and to analyze what rituals (or moves) are followed during the lessons. Finally, this research seeks to explain how power relations are carried out and dealt with inside the lessons under study.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

This investigation sets out to answer one main research question (MRQ), which can be seen below. In order to answer the MRQ, three subordinate research questions are posed, the composite answers of which are believed to constitute the answer to the MRQ. In other words, the insights provided when answering RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 below will provide the answer to the MRQ. The research questions are presented below:

**MRQ:** What factors influence the construction and maintenance of the classroom culture?

RQ1: How are classroom roles negotiated and established during the lessons?

RQ2: What rituals (or moves) are followed during the lessons?

RQ3: How are 'power relations' negotiated between participants during the lessons?

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The culture of the classroom may be viewed as a community of practice (Gee & Green, 1998). Thus, it is essential that teachers as well as students raise their awareness about the occurrences within these communities which contribute to the construction and maintenance of the classroom culture. Classrooms may be viewed as mini societies since they are constituted by groups of people (or members); however, norms, rituals, regulations, violations and rewards are established as interaction among participants takes place (Green & Weade, 1990).

In sum, the value of an EFL lesson does not only imply its potential to provide linguistic data; but the teaching/learning practices have also the liberatory potential to negotiate and alter social empowerment, in which the participants can reconstruct their own cultures and identities to their own advantage (Canagarajah, 1999). Thus, it is worth pointing out that “knowledge constructed in classrooms shapes, and is shaped by, the discursive activity and social practices of members; patterns of practice simultaneously support and constrain access to the academic content of the "official" curriculum and opportunities for learning are influenced by the actions...beyond classroom settings” (Gee & Green, 1998, p. 119).

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The current research performs a multimodal discourse analysis on classroom interactions with the intention of demonstrating the impact that the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom culture has on teaching and learning practices. The study examines the semiotic resources employed such as gaze, posture, body language, furniture arrangement, and the communicational modes among participants within the lessons under investigation. The strategic use of such semiotic resources can facilitate or constrain students' opportunities for learning and are also required to successfully participate within the classroom's community of practice.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of scholarly literature that is relevant to the current study. The purpose of this review is to inform the reader of the pertinent theoretical issues which underpin this research as well as provide support for the analyses and findings. Thus, the ensuing sections review the literature on the primary concepts of classroom culture, the negotiation of power and authority, and multimodality as a methodological approach. Critical classroom discourse analysis, multiliteracies and identity are also central themes that surface within the study and will be reviewed as well.

### **2.1 Classroom as culture**

Central to this research project is the concept of classroom as culture. From this perspective, classes can be viewed as cultures and the process of creating culture as dynamic (Apple, 1992; Green & Weade, 1990). This type of culture involves patterns of behavior, artifacts, and knowledge that people have learned or created (Green & Weade, 1990), and the access to such knowledge depends on the opportunities members have to participate in the dynamics of the class (Goffman, 1964). Therefore, in classrooms,

participants assume institutional roles (for example, teacher or student), which are intended to facilitate their interactions and together construct knowledge. Such institutional roles are assumed under certain social conditions and for specific purposes, hence a group develops their own cultural behavior (Breen, 2001b; Green & Weade, 1990; Prabhu, 1992). Subsequently, among class participants, there is a creation of patterned ways of acting and interacting in the overall events of classroom life, such as, whole class or small group interaction, teacher-student or student-student talk, which may be formal or informal (ibid., 1990).

As stated above, classrooms are environments rich in culture and communication where teachers and students make meanings to construct educational and social life. The concept of culture, in this case, does not refer to a cultural curriculum or lists of concepts to make the participants ‘culturally literate’. On the contrary, the culture of classroom should permit all members to participate in the re-creation of meanings and values; a democratic process where everyone is involved in the determination of what is important in class (Apple, 1992, p. 10-11). In sum, classroom culture can be the gateway to lesson inclusion.

The interaction patterns within a classroom culture, when properly understood, may also reveal the existence of rituals (Quantz, O’Connor & Magolda, 2011). Prabhu (1992) reminds us that classrooms are stereotypical and commonly *ritualized*, varying to some extent from culture to culture. Thus, the following section will address the subject of classroom ritualization.

### **2.1.1 Classroom Ritualization**

The ritualization of the educational space is a major concept in this study. As previously mentioned, Prabhu (1992) proposes that classrooms are stereotypical and ritualized, which makes them a type of social genre. First, they are stereotypical because they may be

commonly perceived as institutional spaces with teachers acting as educators and authorities instead of facilitators. Students are conceived as receptors of knowledge instead of autonomous pupils. Second, classrooms are ritualized, though not generally noticed as such when conformed to, yet disturbing when they are violated (Prabhu, 1990). According to Quantz, O'Connor and Magolda (2011), ritualization in educational spaces is an invisible aspect of everyday school patterns. In other words, "one rule of ritual is that the more we recognize it as a ritual, the less likely it is to affect us; while the less we realize we are participating in a ritual, the more likely it is that its effects will be realized" (ibid. p.3). Prabhu (1992) exemplifies this notion in the following quotation:

The ritualisation may or may not take the form of dress regulations, standing up to show respect, the use of honorifics, first names or last names, not speaking unless asked to, procedures for assignment and submission of work, procedures for punishment and reward, opening and closing moves for the lesson as a whole or for any phase of it, and so on; but there is at least a set of shared notions about the different phases of a lesson, legitimate and deviant behavior, the extent of teacher's authority and learner's rights, and duties and obligations on both sides (p. 228).

Classroom ritualization is quite complex since the real work of schooling takes place in the small actions that are rarely even recognized as ritual (Quantz, O'Connor & Magolda, 2011). Many of these rituals also involve the various 'artifacts' utilized during classes. These may belong to the teacher or student-space items, such as, whiteboards, desks, markers, uniforms, cellphones or books (Apple, 1992). Over time as these 'artifacts' are being managed, groups develop classified ways of communicating about them according to their purpose (Green & Weade, 1990).

Classroom ‘moves’ are another example of ritual. These are actions included in an “agenda” and associated with the classroom lesson since it is a planned and structured event with different stages and goals (Prabhu, 1992). Such ‘moves’ take place through verbal communication or symbolic signs that the group has learned to respond to. Usually, the teacher acts as the conductor, orchestrating the classroom procedures. Some examples of ‘moves’ may be the opening and closing of a lesson, whether or not the teacher sits behind the desk or on it (Prabhu, 1992; Quantz, et. al, 2011); “it is the ritual performance of a teacher that is the most important indicator used by administrators when evaluating teachers” (Quantz, et. al, 2011, p. 5).

Verbal communication in class is commonly ritualized as well. In classrooms it is usual to use the rituals of obeisance, submission, and propitiation when someone under authority (generally students) show respect to someone in authority (generally teachers) (Goffman, 1964). Quantz, O’Connor and Magolda (2011) agree that:

There are rituals of deference that students are expected to show their teachers (i.e., their “superiors”): the lowering of the eyes when being spoken to or, when being disciplined, the meeting of the eyes in an unchallenging manner, and the closed-in, unaggressive posture taken, the crispness in the voice when speaking the sacred words, “yes, ma’am, sorry ma’am”. Perhaps the quickest way for a student to be expelled in school is to fail to show ritual deference to one in authority (p. 4).

To conclude, control of context prevails in classrooms (van Dijk, 1997). The powerful control the aims and goals of the ritualized communicative event; for example, who may speak (or must speak), about what, who responds to questions; the (students’) roles and actions, the lesson schedule, and more. Van Dijk (1997) claims that by ritualizing classroom communicative interactions, teachers take control over their students learning

and thus enhance their language performance (for further information on classroom communication see section 2.4.1 in this chapter). As a result, each participant adopts an implicit role ('who is in control' and 'who is not') allowing the construction of a social configuration as communicative events occur (ibid). Since "many rituals overflow with meaning and have important social impact" (Quantz, et. al, 2011, p.4), the following section will review the social dimension of the classroom.

### **2.1.2 Classroom social dimension**

This study also focuses on the social aspect of classrooms. Green and Weade (1990) claim that every human society is culturally founded and that a classroom is a bounded setting where a group of people constitutes a 'mini' society. According to Prabhu (1992)

a classroom lesson is an event of several different kinds: It is a unit in a planned curricular sequence, an instance of a teaching method in operation, a patterned social activity, and an encounter between human personalities. But several factors involved in the social...dimension of the classroom...are characteristics of individuals (p.225).

In a 'society' with different personalities, goals and interests, individuals need to affiliate and assume a type of social contract with rights and obligations over time (Green & Weade, 1990). Thus, classrooms may be perceived as routinized social events, with roles and role relationships established by tradition and with a ritualistic aspect to the actions performed (Prabhu, 1992).

The classrooms' social facet may, indeed, support or constrain the participants' opportunities to learn as they interact. Social forces within learning contexts will always outline what is available to be learned and will shape the interaction of learners' minds with

external linguistic or communicative knowledge, establishing how individuals are to conduct themselves, and socially organize their behavior (Breen, 2001b; Goffman, 1964). Therefore, as in any other type of society, the classroom also needs to operate in an organized manner. It could hardly work without the establishment of roles or hierarchy of functions (Green & Weade, 1990; van Dijk, 1997).

Finally, hierarchies lead to a close relation between social interaction, power and authority within classroom settings. From this view, authority resembles an 'axis', allowing power to circulate among the classroom participants as they construct and gain knowledge through teaching and learning practices. Beyond the teacher's influence, it becomes apparent that other forces are in play during lessons, and they all exert power, which influences classroom actions and interactions. Thus, the following section will address the presence of power and authority within the classes.

## **2.2 Power and authority**

First, authority in new social contexts, especially in educational settings, means a transformation in interpersonal relations. As such, authority could evolve and should help usher in a positive, rather than a negative sense of power. However, teachers as 'authority' have special access to power resources, for example, speech acts (commands or orders). Teachers can also use the control of action and mind by managing desired social symbolic resources (knowledge, education or esteem). In other words, teachers through authority make use of a persuasive power by 'suggesting' or simply 'asking' to do what is planned in the lesson. Over time with these practices, students acquire beliefs about how classes should function and absorb the dynamics of power relations and the character of authority within educational venues (Apple, 1992; Luke, 1995; van Dijk, 1997).

Second, power in social contexts is defined as a “specific relation between social groups or institutions. That is, we [might] ignore various forms of personal power between individuals, unless such power is based on group membership” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 5). From this perspective, power is grounded in group membership, which affords individual members (teachers and students) access to spaces (classrooms) or events (lessons) (Gee & Green, 1998). For instance, the power invested in membership allows students the physical entrance to the room, to be part of the class-list, activities, team-work or have an evaluation at the end of the course (to mention just a few). In the case of teachers, group membership allows them to open and close the lesson, give homework, take attendance, reward or punish students and make explicit the need for directed attention. Students’ or teachers’ membership grants power in the form of access to learning, teaching and rituals, social practices that are prime goals on both sides.

As described above, the presence of power through authority is emphasized by the practice of rituals (discussed in section 2.1.1). Luke (1995) claims that school is a public space in which particular relations of power and authority are ritualized and control the narratives of school traditions and policies. This reveals *asymmetrical relationships*, which make interaction among participants turn complex and unbalanced since the access to power is not equal (Breen, 2001b).

However, students can eventually access power as they search for learning opportunities (Gee & Green, 1998). And even though, education and power are terms of an indissoluble couplet, all participants can negotiate the access to power resources (as knowledge or inclusion) through the division of power; from the teacher (or the powerful one) narrowed down and spread to each student (Apple, 1992; van Dijk, 1997). Van Dijk (1997) proposes that authority’s complexity should not obscure power relations,

emphasizing that power is not inherently evil. There are many examples of acceptable power enactment, such as the one between parents and their children, or (in this case) teachers and students. He goes on to say that each context:

...needs to develop a system that allows their members to act as such, to know what is good and bad for them, and what to do in situations of conflict, threat or competition. In sum, socially, ideologies function... to serve as an interface between collective group interests and individual social practices (p. 27).

Finally, power, authority and socio-cultural practices within educational spaces can certainly be negotiated and managed by all participants. Classrooms, instead of a collection of ritualized procedures, can become spaces where instructors portray themselves as facilitators and guides through knowledge. Students can be more autonomous agents, who, through the use of class memberships and (well employed) power resources can feel encouraged and afforded for learning opportunities.

### **2.3 Methodological approaches**

In order to analyze the lessons under investigation, the present thesis uses multimodality as a methodological approach. Multimodality was chosen as the methodological approach for the current research because it provides tools for analyzing and describing the full repertoire of meaning-making or semiotic resources, which students and teachers use to communicate or participate in particular social situations (Goffman, 1964; Jewitt, 2009). With this in mind, the first section that follows addresses the foundations of multimodality as well as the concepts followed during the analyses of the data presented in the findings chapter. Then, visual semiotics are explored, providing the basis to comprehend the meaning potential of visual images. Finally, a section is presented on multimodal interactional analysis.

### 2.3.1 Multimodality

Multimodality describes approaches that understand communication and representation beyond language (Jewitt, 2009). All interactions are multimodal within social contexts, and, multimodality takes all communicational acts to be socially constituted (ibid., 2009; Norris, 2004). As the term expresses, multimodality consists of the simultaneous employment of various communicative modes. These modes that are employed by participants during their interactions may be: 1) *embodied*, which ‘belong to the human body’ and are real-time actions (e.g. gaze, gesture, spoken language); 2) *disembodied* ‘do **not** belong to the human body’ and are frozen actions (e.g. writing or furniture arrangement in the classroom) (Norris, 2004, pp. 13-14). Such modes are co-dependent on one another in various manners, and the hierarchical structure they assume in relation to each another depends on interactions, thus making classroom multimodal interaction a subject for careful analysis (ibid.).

In general terms, a mode of communication is a semiotic (meaning-making) system with rules and regularities (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001 in Norris, 2004). In educational settings, the communicative modes present are shaped by the daily social interaction of participants (Jewitt, 2009). Students and teachers orchestrate meaning through their own selection and configuration of modes for communication. They make choices across different semiotic resources simultaneously and these combine in a multimodal phenomena (ibid.). Some examples of commonly used *embodied* modes in classrooms include gesture, gaze, posture, proxemics, head movement and spoken language (Jewitt, 2009; Norris, 2004).

*Disembodied* modes are also analyzed in this study. They carry great significance because “These actions are frozen in the material objects themselves and are therefore

evident.” (Norris, 2004, p. 14). The most “evident” in an educational institution is the **classroom**. That is to say, the physical characteristics within the room, furniture arrangement or *layout*, the artifacts used (posters, books, desks, uniforms or markers) just to mention a few examples of disembodied modes. In sum, all of these visual elements of the classroom and its context are very important features since they contribute to a global experience (Jewitt, 2008; Wysocki, 2011).

The relevance of such a complex relationship between physical artifacts and settings and the selected communication modes among classroom participants is the production of school subject knowledge, in this case, English learning. Overall, the use of multimodal analysis within educational contexts attempts to interpret classroom interactions beyond language. Multimodality is a potential method for the current study because its procedures lead us to realize how students and teachers co-produce notions of ability, inclusion, participation and (at times) resistance with the use of semiotic resources at their disposal (Norris, 2004). Therefore, the following section will address the importance of visual semiotics within classrooms.

### **2.3.1.1 Visual semiotics**

The core unit of semiotics is the *sign*, which is the fusion of form and meaning (Kress, 2010). In visual semiotics, there are principles for connecting the visual signs with meanings. In other words, once two or more people have understood the same code, they can connect the same meaning to the same graphic patterns in mutual understanding. Signs, modes and meaning-making are viewed as dynamic and open systems that are closely connected to the social context of use (Jewitt, 2009).

Images represent the real social world. They carry particular meanings depending on where we see them and how they are used to accomplish different goals within society.

As a resource for representation, images, like language, display regularities, which can be the subject of relative formal description. However, language does not have or need angles of vision to achieve perspective, nor does it need spatial dispositions of elements to achieve the meanings of syntactic relations, yet images have and need both (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

The images from the lessons under investigation in this study will be analyzed using three semiotic systems from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design framework. These are: 1) the *represented participants*, 2) the *interactive participants* and 3) *composition*, which, according to Scollon and Scollon (2003), are semiotic systems that can demonstrate "how interaction order is visually depicted" (p. 86). First, *represented participants* are the construction element used in a picture (person, image, text, graph or logo). The representation of the participants in pictures also understands the vectors (directions of gaze) present when one participant looks at another one. Second, the *participants' interactions* are of three types: a) between the producer of the image and the participants represented within the display; b) among the represented participants within the image; c) between the represented participants and the viewer/reader/user (ibid.). The last semiotic system is *composition*. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose there are two basic parts to information *composition*: centered and polarized. At the same time, polarized is divided into left/right (given and new) and the upper/lower parts (ideal and real).

Visual semiotics help to create an understanding about how images display different ideas for specific purposes depending on the design of the images. However, the use of the visual mode is not the same from one society to another, and it is not the same from one social group or institution to another. Thus, anyone interested in communication through images should not only focus on the aesthetic and expressive dimension, but also on the

social, political and communicative dimensions (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). We shall then also focus on the interaction among the participants within groups in society (such as the classroom). This communication among the participants is also an important dimension that requires multimodal analysis. The following section addresses the foundations to analyze multimodal interactions.

### **2.3.1.2 Multimodal interaction analysis**

This approach grants considerable attention to the notion of context and situated interaction because both, language and visual communication express meanings belonging to and structured by cultures in society (Jewitt, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The focus is on the action taken by a social actor with or through multimodal means, that is, how various modes are constitutive of social interaction and identities with interest in habitus and embodiment (Jewitt, 2009; Norris, 2004). As such, it is worth recalling the variety of physical multimodal means used during interactions since multimodality's focus goes beyond perceiving interaction as "linguistic-only". Thus, the interest is in how actors utilize embodied and disembodied modes (Norris, 2004) as well as how people use real-time actions, such as gaze, gesture, posture, spoken language, or frozen-actions such as objects or spaces whilst interacting and communicating (see section 2.3.1. of the current research study).

On the other hand, communicative modes in social interaction may be overwhelming for analysts. As participants move their bodies, hands, arms and head, the observer attempts to understand the content of what each actor is reacting to through each mode (Norris, 2004). Hence, multimodal interactional analysis sheds light on understanding and describing what is going on within interactions as well as what individuals express and

react to in specific situations (Jewitt, 2009). To understand mediated modes or actions utilized by the actors as they interact, units of analysis are classified as smaller and larger actions, and in turn defined as lower-level and higher-level (a chain of lower-level actions) (Norris, 2004). For instance, in spoken language, a most commonly lower-level action analyzed is the *intonation unit*. In the case of a higher-level action, it is a series of lower-level actions constructed by individuals' interaction such as, a *question-answer* construct with the objective to search for specific and contextualized information (ibid.)

In multimodal interaction, contextualized expression and communication is the aim of social actors. According to Norris (2004), communication can be defined as actual interaction:

Communicating is interaction if one person conveys a message and another person perceives it. The modes utilized for interacting do not create a communicative moment as an interaction, but rather the process of doing something to or for or with people allows us to understand a communicative moment as an interaction (p. 149).

However, interaction has regularities and is usually rule governed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Contextual contingencies are always present and functioning simultaneously as actors or participants to share ideologies and exchange messages through communicative modes. It is worth repeating that multimodal interaction is attached to context, and its employment in classrooms develop meaningful forms of learning beyond language. Taking into account that semiotic modes are based on context; then, discourses of gender, social class, race, institutional norms and other articulations of power shape and regulate people's use of these meaning-making modes and resources (van Leeuwen, 2005).

However, the study of linguistic behavior during the lessons under analysis is also of interest to this research. Linguistic behavior is, of course, an important mode in any

multimodal investigation. Therefore, the following section will provide a discussion of critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA).

#### **2.4 Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis**

The aim of this section is to provide a review of Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (CCDA) to better understand the focus of the study on classroom culture and communication dynamics. The analyses regarding classroom interactions (presented in Chapter 4 in this study) employ CCDA to describe crucial and significant moments during lessons in which “the teacher's own personality is a major factor in the interplay of forces, and conflict resolution” (Prabhu, 1992, p. 231) and how in some classrooms the social and personal dimensions are stronger than the pedagogic ones (ibid.).

First, discourse in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) may be defined as any form of language in use or as naturally occurring language (Brown & Yule, 1983). Another perspective of discourse refers to the specific contexts of language in use. According to Kamberelis and Scott (1992) “Discourses are perhaps best described as socially and culturally informed systems of possibilities for knowing, being, and acting” (p. 361). Therefore, various types of discourses can be found in ELT. One of the main examples applied to this field is *classroom discourse*. This can be conceptualized as the language that teachers and students use to communicate inside the classroom. Teachers and students mutually construct through their interactions a unique discourse with its own roles, rules and even expectations, thus creating social action (Green & Weade, 1990; van Dijk, 1997). Green and Weade (1990) claim there are five principles to understand classroom discourse based on the theoretical framework from Cazden, (1986), Erickson (1986) and Green (1983). Such principles are: “1) Face-to face interaction is culturally patterned; 2)

Meaning is situation specific; 3) Frames of reference help guide individual and group members' interpretations and construction of meaning; 4) Complex communicative demands are placed on teacher and students; 5) Communicative performance can lead to positive and negative assessment of ability" (Green & Weade, 1990, p. 329).

Most work on discourse as action focuses on conversation and dialogue since discourse is naturally associated with the use of spoken language (van Dijk, 1997). Hence, critical classroom observation is generally performed because it is characterized by studying *interactions* and *discourses* in real time. As a result, CCDA proposes a compound of categories to describe verbal behaviors of teachers and students as they interact in the classroom, also using the concept of text for spoken language to reveal it as an analytical and observable behavior (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

In classroom dynamics, spoken language exposes the different participants' personalities and objectives they (desire to) possess or achieve. They come out implicitly or explicitly, through positive or negative channels. Teachers are the only entity having the concession to express themselves or act openly. But even teachers engaging in communicative language teaching, attempting to make their classes as learner-centered as possible "can fail in creating opportunities for genuine interaction in their classrooms" (Kumaravadivelu, 1993, p. 13). The manner in which most lessons are structured does not stimulate the wish of learners to say something, nor does it concern itself with what they might have to say, learners (at times) do not find a space to speak as themselves, to use language in communicative encounters, to create text, to stimulate responses from fellow learners, or to find solutions to relevant problems (Thornbury, 1996, p. 279).

There are various manners in which participants can interact through their discourses. Thus, the use and citation of classroom transcripts as a technique of critical discourse analysis for classroom observation to study interaction plays a major evidence role (extracts from participants' interactions) (Lemke, 2004; van Lier, 2001). In addition, the use of such techniques to observe discourse interaction undoubtedly result in a much better understanding of classroom aims and events, particularly in terms of teacher talk and student talk, unveiling its crucial limitations (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). From this perspective, it is notable that communication during lessons allows social actors to participate and be involved in the dynamics (Norris, 2004). Therefore, the following section gives a brief review on classroom communication.

#### **2.4.1 Classroom communication**

As previously mentioned, classrooms are environments rich in culture and communication where teachers and students (through interaction) make meanings in order to construct classroom life (see section 2.1). The purpose of exploring classroom communication, in this research, is to gain a better understanding of language from a linguistic point of view. Classroom communication is also examined in order to be aware of what is required by community members to participate in the social events taking place. Green and Weade (1990) adopt a similar view and claim that classroom discourse and communication are closely studied to understand the communicative requirements of participation in instructional and social events of classrooms to discover the factors that support and/or constrain meaning construction, interpretation of language, and access to learning.

Since classrooms may be perceived as a 'social situation' according to Goffman (1964), communication occurs "where two or more individuals find themselves in one another's immediate presence and it lasts until the next-to-last person leaves" (p. 135). However, social interaction and actual communication within educational settings is based on contextual configurations as well, turning communication practices into a complex interactional system. Classrooms have very specific characteristics that should not be taken for granted, as they define the interface scenarios. Therefore, van Lier (2001) reminds us that research must be focused holistically but also on the smallest details, and should "allow us not to generalize but to particularize, that is, to adapt our skills, ideas, and strategies to the changing circumstances and the multifarious influences of the context in which the investigated processes occur" (p. 90). From such a perspective, close attention is required to the macro and micro details of classrooms (participants' power access, identities, intentions and purposes; institutional and cultural characteristics; lesson dynamics or even the actual objects managed within the space), which make communication to be distinct and different from other everyday talk in non-educational settings.

The factors described above may help to differentiate communication in educational and other settings in society. Another approach to find the difference between classroom communication and talk in non-educational settings, is to notice that interaction during a lesson is commonly characterized by teachers talking most of the time while students respond passively and only follow directions; thus, the fact that "such classroom interaction is easily recognizable and is often taken as evidence of its **artificiality**" (van Lier, 2001, p. 91). This is a characteristic that everyday talk in non-educational contexts does not possess. People (i.e. on the street, at the market) do not plan to have a regular conversation. They may not ritualize the interaction nor obey patterns for information exchange; practices that

do rule ‘lesson talk’. Therefore, the section that follows, will examine in more detail the dynamics related to the initiation-response-feedback communication pattern within the classroom.

#### **2.4.1.1 IRF Pattern (3part exchange)**

Teaching-centered instruction may focus mostly on providing significant amounts of knowledge and information from teacher to student. Thus, the pattern of **Initiation-Response-Feedback** is one of the most frequently occurring types of classroom communication, and is characterized by its three-part cycle. The teacher initiates, the student responds, then the teacher provides feedback: the IRF format (van Lier, 2001, p. 94; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). As such, educational spaces become domains constraining the types of talk within them as they have to stage ritualistic procedures to be considered “adequate” (Prabhu, 1992; Quantz, et. al, 2011; van Lier, 2001). Classroom participants construct cultural knowledge about what to do (say), to (with) whom, when, where, under what conditions, and for what purpose (Green & Weade, 1990, p. 328). Therefore, interactions within groups become a communication chain. In other words, if we want to determine if such a communication chain is the ‘correct’, ‘expected’ or even the ‘appropriate’ one, we shall consider the teacher as the typical initiator (Green & Weade, 1990). For instance, teachers pose a question placing an obligation on the listeners for a response. Then, a responder is designated. Hence, “the designation of the responder by the questioner (teacher) signals a style of discourse that is governed by a controlled exchange of turns rather than a style that permits multiple or open responses” (ibid., p. 330). Within the analyses sections that follow in Chapter 4 of the current work, the concept of

‘intertextuality’ (Lemke, 2004) becomes a salient focus of analysis; as such, the following sections will provide an overview of this concept.

#### **2.4.2 Intertextuality**

In social communities, intertextuality is an important characteristic of the manner in which language is used (Lemke, 2004). From this perspective, the term *text* does not only imply a written product. A *text* is a unit of language in use that makes sense to anyone who is familiar with it, whether written, spoken or enacted (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Thus, the ways in which meanings are made through texts and meanings themselves depend on the prevalence of other texts recognized as having certain kinds of relationships with one another (Lemke, 2004). That is to say, meanings are made through the relations between two texts; meanings that cannot be made within any single text (ibid.).

In classrooms, culture itself can be understood as a *text* that is read by cultural participants. As a gesture in dialogue, performance is an utterance and carries meaning from both the individual participants as well as the socially constructed interaction (Quantz, O’Connor & Magolda, 2011). Performance, then, may become central to intertextual analysis. Kamberelis and Scott (1992) have a similar view and make a contribution to what can be also perceived as text:

from a semiotic point of view, any meaningful artifact may be viewed as a text...there are many kinds of texts (e.g., smiles, road signs, paintings, films, dance productions, novels)...Language almost always occurs as a text, and not as isolated words and sentences. Texts are produced in specific social situations and for specific purposes (p. 361).

Lemke (2004) points out that in current educational research data is presented in the form of texts: “transcripts of classroom and small group discourse, talk-aloud protocols,

and interviews; textbooks; syllabi; test questions and written responses; institutional documents; student writing in various genres; and observer fieldnotes” (p. 257). In more specific terms, the intertextual relationships this study concerns itself with are between teacher question and student reply; between teacher, language and community language; and between written curriculum document and records of classroom discourse (ibid.). Intertextuality viewed in such a manner presents us with various types of *text* relations in real-time interaction (a discursive event such as a class or a conversation) and other actions taking place in frozen time (filling in the blanks in a textbook) (Gee & Green, 1998; Norris, 2004).

As mentioned in the discussion of IRF patterns, students’ responses that parrot teachers’ previous utterances or performance is certainly another example of intertextual connections if we see lessons as a patterned dominant interaction. In other words, teachers and students are continuously constructing intertextual relationships. The construction of these relationships can be viewed as an assembling cultural ideology, a system for assigning meaning and significance to what is said and done; therefore, socially defining participants (Bloome & Bailey, 1992 in Gee & Green, 1998). As participants engage in text and talk, they do it in a complex blend of social roles and identities. Thus, the following section will briefly address the concepts of multiliteracies and identity, as they are part of classroom interaction and culture.

## **2.5 Multiliteracies and identity**

Individuals, throughout their lives, develop primary discourses as a result of a natural process of enculturation. This serves as a “framework” for their acquisition and learning of other discourses later in life (Gee, 1990). Family is a clear example of a society of intimates considered to be a *primary* institution. Here, the process of enculturation takes place when

we are raised and taught values and behaviors (ibid., 1998). However, there are other discourses beyond the primary discourse called secondary discourses. These are developed to access secondary institutions that require one to communicate with non-intimates (**schools**, churches, stores) (ibid.). Secondary discourses are built on and go beyond the uses of language we acquire as part of our primary discourse. Gee (1998) calls those uses of language in secondary discourses ‘secondary uses of language’.

As such, an EFL classroom is considered a secondary institution. All participants can identify themselves as a part of it through the mastery of their *secondary discourses*. In other words, individuals become ‘literate participants’ with access to classroom life and successfully interact with non-intimates. However, the traditional meaning of the word “literacy” (ability to read and write) only situates literacy in the individual person, rather than in society and it shades the multiple ways in which literacy relates with other skills (Gee, 1990, p. 31). Thus, this study intends to portray the concept of literacy as also having great impact in historical, social and cultural practices in education. From this perspective, literacy is involved in talk interaction, values and beliefs; making individuals move forward in a process of enculturation (Gee, 1990; Jewitt, 2008).

Literacy is becoming a more pluralized and multifarious concept in educational discourses. Thus, multiliteracies is introduced as it takes literacy beyond the standard forms of written/spoken language; providing a better understanding of how various literacies function and emerge in other contexts besides the educational one (Jewitt, 2008). The concept of multiliteracy emerged as a response to new social conditions and changes in communicational practices, emphasizing what it means to be *literate* nowadays. Thus, the social objective of multiliteracies is to situate teachers and students as active participants in wider literacy practices across boundaries of difference as: student values, identity and/or

power (Appadurai, 1990; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Harvey, 2003 in Jewitt, 2008).

Even though the concept of multiliteracies is situated in a social setting, it is also necessary to see participants with individual backgrounds as affecting their social performance. Being a 'particular *who*' to display a '*what*' requires to always act, think, value, interact and use language in sync with and in coordination with other individuals, and with various objects or "props" in appropriate locations and appropriate times (Gee, Knorr Cetina, Latour in Gee, 1990, p. 159). Hence, when classroom participants master their secondary discourses of 'being a teacher/student' this will shape their identities. The role of a teacher as authority will let him/her shape the 'right' secondary discourse of his/her students at the appropriate time and place. And at the same time, the identity of the student will create a role, which will require being 'literate' to take part in the classroom interaction at the appropriate time and place. However, participants should also be aware that in academic discourse "there is a whole dimension of authorized language, its rhetoric, syntax, vocabulary, and even pronunciation...[which] exists purely to underline the authority" (Bourdieu in Kumaravadivelu, 1999, p. 462). Then, students are able to examine social dimensions of their own literacy practices and understand how social, cultural, economic and political conventions build their formation as particular individuals.

To sum up, life in classrooms may facilitate the development of students' discourses. The management of the wide variety of tools for teaching can be rethought and refreshed. Inevitably, social situations, settings and individuals will continue changing. Consequently, teaching methodologies, approaches to language and pedagogy will attempt to keep up with social changes. Therefore, what can be actually done is to include students in the lesson text and classroom decisions; what they believe it is important for them to

learn. In addition, teachers should aim to harmonize the intertextuality of lessons and familiarity with intertextuality in their first language creating innovative fashions to approach their foreign language learning skills (Breen, 2001b). Better understanding such collaborative practices as well as properly managed social, discursive, communicative and multimodal patterns can demonstrate that lessons and education overall are jointly constructed. Teachers and learners, as equal participants, will acknowledge and respect each other's identities, difficulties and autonomy (ibid.).

## **Chapter 3: Study Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the methodology used to gather and analyze data for the present research study. First, the two locations where data were gathered and the participants will be described. Then, the techniques for data collection as well as the analysis procedures will be addressed. Finally, the last section will provide a brief conclusion for this chapter.

### **3.1 Research methodology**

This study adopts as its methodological framework, a multimodal ethnographic classroom discourse analysis. From Watson-Gegeo's (1988) perspective "one of the hallmarks of ethnographic method is intensive, detailed observation of a setting" (p. 583). The term ethnography "refers to a range of diverse and ever-changing research approaches originating in anthropological and sociological research...[whose purpose] is to come to a deeper understanding of how individuals view and participate in their own social and cultural worlds" (Harklau, 2005, p. 179).

The current study also uses multimodality and critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA) as methodological approaches to analyze the lessons under investigation. First, multimodality provides tools for analyzing and describing the full repertoire of semiotic resources that participants use to communicate or participate in particular social situations (Goffman, 1964; Jewitt, 2009). As such, theoretical framework on multimodal interaction analysis and visual semiotics provide the basis to comprehend the meaning potential of visual images and meaning-making practices enacted by social actors. That is, how various modes are brought into social interaction and identities with interest in habitus and embodiment (Jewitt, 2009; Norris, 2004). Second, the use of CCDA has the potential to

offer rich representations of our classroom practices. With a focus on participants' discourses by means of critical ethnography, this approach presents a disciplined questioning of the ways in which power works through the discursive practices in classrooms (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

### **3.2 Research locations**

The data were collected at two public institutions that offer tertiary level teacher education programs. These institutions present different types of infrastructure, students and 'traditional' versus 'progressive' institutional policies regarding their educational practices. Thus, the following sections provide a detailed description of each institution.

#### **3.2.1 Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP)**

The BUAP is an autonomous state university of higher education providing a full offer of majors in both the hard sciences and the humanities. The university aims to serve the community by providing high quality and affordable education that is available to everyone, including underprivileged citizens. This being the case, the student population at the university is quite heterogeneous, consisting of learners with diverse sociocultural backgrounds (socioeconomic, rural/urban, educational, indigenous heritage, among others). It is worth mentioning that the university is considered autonomous because it is not overtly regulated by outside institutions, and it is responsible for establishing its own institutional and educational policies.

Within the BUAP, the Facultad de Lenguas offers a Bachelor's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. As such, this degree is exclusively focused on teacher development in EFL. According to the official curriculum of the BA program in

ELT, the general aim is to educate competent teachers of English who are able to “utilize a diversity of modes, approaches, technologies, strategies and techniques in order to facilitate the learning of English as a foreign language in distinct educational and socioeconomic environments” to meet the needs of the Mexican community (<http://www.escueladelenguas.com/lenguas-modernas.html>). However, learners enter the program with very little proficiency in English and receive target language instruction, linguistic courses, ELT methodology courses, and English-speaking culture courses given only in the L2 (English) over a period of five years. As such, the study program is divided in two levels, basic and formative. The basic level requires the students to take eight EFL courses throughout the program, which are meant to provide them with adequate proficiency in the target language to course the formative level of the program. In the formative level students follow a wide scope pedagogy program in order to become specialized professionals in the field of ELT. Upon graduation, learners are expected to be bilingual teachers of English with a solid understanding of English-speaking cultures, and with a sound base in linguistics and ELT methodology. The data collected for this study from this institution were collected during an ELT lesson.

### **3.2.2 Benemérito Instituto Normal del Estado de Puebla (BINE)**

This institution is part of the ‘Normal’ Mexican system. That is to say, the BINE is a teacher education program sponsored directly by the Mexican Ministry of Education that is specifically designed to train teachers to work in the public school system. Almost all teachers who work in the Public school system in Mexico must graduate from an institution that belongs to the Normal system.

According to the objectives of the institution, teacher training involves a professionalization process that employs updating and ongoing evaluation ([www.bine.mx](http://www.bine.mx)). They further include the presence of strategic planning and management to optimize the institution's levels of competition, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, relevance and transparency (*ibid.*). As such, the main strategy employed for teaching training is to designate students to different public institutions outside the state of Puebla (usually in rural areas) to serve as teaching assistants from very early stages of the BA program. According to the institutional philosophy, this procedure is followed to develop and enhance teaching practices in the areas of instruction students want to specialize in (*ibid.*).

The BINE has recently begun to include EFL courses into their curriculum, and it was within one of these classroom lessons that data were gathered. However, the institution outsources the English classes from a different university, and there is no classroom designated specifically for EFL lessons. Classes take place in a multiuse room that was first designed to be a library but the room was modified later to serve as a library/computer lab simultaneously. The institution has assigned different staff to be in charge of the room and the equipment. In addition, each semester, if the institution lacks cubicles for full time teachers, they are sent to this multiuse room. It is evident that the space is often overcrowded as it is occupied with individuals attempting to fulfill a variety of often conflicting objectives that may include teaching-learning, solving administrative problems, cyber-surfing, and the (re)organization of books among others. As a result, the learning environment overwhelms students with several authority entities. The classroom arrangement and the lack of a designated classroom for English classes may project the idea that the subject is not taken seriously in the institution.

### **3.3 Study participants**

This study required the observation of authentic EFL lessons. The selection of the institutions was based on two main reasons. First, the lessons within the BINE setting were taught and recorded by the researcher of the present study. The decision was grounded on convenience of time and access to the institution. Second, the data gathered from the BUAP context were part of a previous larger study. However, the researcher of the current thesis was part of the lesson as a student of the BA in ELT (described above). Furthermore, the institutions have a diversity in their educational policies and infrastructure; perceptions and objectives for English courses. In both contexts, the participants are college students who take English lessons as different parts of their BA programs (including the researcher as a student). For this study, to have more than one type of cultural response to English classes is relevant. One group from each institution was chosen, but the groups' language level and BA stage were taken into account because of the difference in: general social behavior (with classmates and towards the instructor according to their age), language confidence, and interest in the subject due to previous experience. The students from both contexts were informed of the purposes of the current investigation and consented to be video recorded as research participants.

#### **3.3.1 BUAP Participants**

There were 30 students (20 female and 10 male students) in the group, whose ages ranged between twenty to twenty seven years. They were enrolled in the EFL course level V, their current level of English is B1 within the Common European. The learners represent a diverse population with: rural/urban backgrounds, a wide range of socioeconomic classes and multiple motivations for wanting to learn English. However, the analyses reveal (see Chapter 4) that these individuals clearly interact and build a distinct community of practice,

with established norms, roles, artifacts and culture (Breen, 2001b; Gee & Green, 1998; Green & Weade, 1990) which is an important focus of the current study.

### **3.3.2 BINE Participants**

The group was composed of young adults (33 females and 1 male) whose ages range between eighteen and twenty-five years of age. They come from a lower socioeconomic class, yet have quite limited experience with English as a foreign language. They are in the first semester of the BA in special education, and their current level of English is A1 within the Common European Framework. The lesson under examination is part of their first English course. In addition, the teacher/researcher is also a participant within this lesson. She is a twenty-six year old female with a degree in ELT from the BUAP.

### **3.4 Data collection and analysis procedures**

It was interesting to gather data from two locations and be able to analyze different contexts. As such, consent had to be acquired from the school administrators, students, and teachers who were participants. Written consent from all of the aforementioned participants was successfully acquired. Each lesson was recorded with a mini-DV camera from its opening to its closing. Field notes were taken to complement the analyses of the footage. Thus, the following sections briefly describe specific procedures for each setting. Specific data samples were selected from different phases of the lessons for their analysis. The criteria for selection were based on the amount of cultural, social, and/or ritualized activity that shed light on meaningful ‘discursive events’ (Fairclough, 1992) within the lessons in regards to the construction and maintenance of the culture of the classroom (Gee & Green, 1998; Goffman, 1964; Prabhu, 1992). The data selection also considered technical issues where large sections of audio/video were unclear or inaudible.

### **3.4.1 BUAP setting**

The teacher and researcher (who analyzed this data previously as part of a larger project) would arrange a recording session, and students were notified that the lesson would be recorded in advance. First, for the data to be collected the teacher leading the lesson under examination agreed on setting up the time for recording different sessions and requested the right to choose which lessons would be video recorded. The lessons were recorded from the beginning until their closing.

### **3.4.2 BINE setting**

For the data collection, the researcher/teacher recorded three EFL lessons from the beginning until their closing. The lessons to be recorded were decided more or less randomly; however, the lesson analyzed in this study was chosen due to the major content of cultural, social, and/or ritualized activity among the participants and the setting. It is worth mentioning that this setting presented physical constraints. The classroom's complex furniture arrangement caused the researcher certain difficulties to set up the camera in a convenient angle where all the interaction could be visible.

All the footage gathered from both locations was transcribed to analyze the dialogue structure and other features of the discourse that was present. Then, the key phases of the lessons under examination were represented with still shots from the video recordings and their accompanying transcripts not only to know what was being said and how it was being performed as part of classroom discourses, but also to identify the amount of multimodal prompts such as gesture, facial expression and posture. Once the data were gathered and strategically organized, a deeper and full multimodal and critical classroom discourse analysis of all the classroom contexts was executed.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a discussion of the research findings that were obtained as a result of the data analysis procedures (see Chapter 3) is presented. The following sections present the analyses of various linguistic and multimodal interactions between students and teachers during classroom lessons, which are illustrative of the manner in which classroom culture is constructed and maintained.

The first three sections are analyses from one of the EFL lessons at the BINE (Benemérito Instituto Normal del Estado). These data samples show that the interactions taking place restrain students' participation due to various factors, which are discussed below. This results in limited learning opportunities, complete or partial loss of authority and asymmetrical relationships within the classroom community of practice (to mention a few) (Breen, 2001b; Green & Weade, 1990; van Lier, 2001). Sections 4.3.4 and 4.3.5 present classroom analyses within the BUAP context. In these analyses, the multimodal resources that are employed by the teacher take on particular importance. It is evident that the teacher has a common tendency to 'embody' the communicative events (instructions, commands) within the classroom, which provides particular insights into the importance of multimodality within classroom contexts.

### **4.2 Research questions**

**MRQ:** What factors influence the construction and maintenance of the classroom culture?

RQ1: How are classroom roles negotiated and established during the lessons?

RQ2: What classroom rituals (or moves) are followed during the lessons?

RQ3: How are ‘power relations’ negotiated between participants during the lessons?

### **4.3 Findings**

With the use of multimodality and critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA) the data collected were analyzed in order to study the construction and maintenance of classroom culture. Firstly, the data were explored through multimodal analysis of the semiotic resources (embodied/disembodied modes) found within the classroom such as: gaze, posture, body language, and furniture arrangement among other resources within the contexts under investigation (Norris, 2004). In the case of CCDA, it involved the careful identification and description of verbal and multimodal behaviors of participants as they negotiated power and interacted in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; see section 2.4).

#### **4.3.1 Teacher and student communicative practices**

The analysis that follows examines a series of multimodal interactions during one of the English language lessons under investigation within the BINE context. The analyses of spoken exchanges reveal significant power issues through the exercise of authority by the English teacher. This exchange exemplifies the manner in which teachers use the IRF structure as a control mechanism (see section 2.4.1.1) and how classroom discourses manifest implicit power relations (Apple, 1992; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Luke, 1995; van Dijk, 1997). The following analysis unveils the manner in which the teacher exercises power through spoken discourse. The analysis revealed that during the ninety-minute class, the teacher makes use of the IRF pattern most of the time. In addition, other types of linguistic (dis)empowerment are also found in the data.

Table 4.1 below exemplifies a phase of the lesson in which the **Initiation** is successfully accomplished but the **Response** corresponding to the students is not

exhaustive. Lines 2, 4, 6 and 8 show the amount of information given by the teacher, which is larger than a student's or all the students' combined responses (see Line 3, Line 5, Line 7).

Table 4.1.

*Teacher's initiation and students' responses.* T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking.

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
2	T	Ok, entonces... take your seat, take your seat...ok, entonces...sh sh sh sh...ok, entonces habíamos dicho que "space"...y todos calladitos.."space stat....station" ¿es qué?	Opening of the class. The teacher asks the first question to review the lesson vocabulary ( <b>Initiation</b> )
3	SS	Estacion espacial	Students' <b>response</b>
4	T	Estacion espacial, la segunda palabra "neighborhood" ya la habíamos visto en nuestro ejercicio la vez pasada que les pregunte donde querían su casa de los sueños	Exhaustive teacher <b>feedback</b> and second vocabulary question ( <b>Initiation</b> )
5	S1	¿Qué?	
6	T	"neighborhood"! Que les dije dónde estaría la casa de sus sueños y entre paréntesis les puse "neighborhood"...¿no se acuerdan? Qué les dije que podía estar en Polanco, en la Vista, en...	
7	S2	Sí	Student's <b>response</b>
8	T	Aha, podría ser, podría traducirse como barrio o colonia, "neighborhood", y les dije también que podía estar en las Lomas...yes?, y luego tenemos "view"...	Teacher's <b>feedback</b>



*Figure 4.1.* Teacher's symbolic posture and hand position.

According to the excerpt of the lesson (see table 4.1 above), power negotiations and asymmetrical relationships seem to be well established and are maintained mainly through linguistic interaction, which the teacher strictly controls through the use of the IRF exchange (van Lier, 2001; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). However, another focus of this study is to analyze the participants' embodied communicative modes (Norris, 2004). Figure 4.1 above demonstrates the manner in which asymmetrical relationships are manifested multimodally within the classroom. The linguistic representation in Line 2 corresponds to the moment when the image was taken as part of the "lesson opening" phase (see Table 4.1 above). In the image we find a symbolic posture and hand position as part of the teacher's body language; a ritual carrying interactional meaning (Goffman, 1981). The teacher's hand position as a visuospatial modality (Stivers & Sidnell, 2005) attempts to capture the attention of the group; but simultaneously, this modality aims to communicate a sentiment of "peace". This may resemble a ritual of greeting acting as the teacher's aide to control the context (Van Dijk, 1997). Therefore, it becomes evident that the use of such semiotic resources ritualizes the opening of the class.

Furthermore, Table 4.2 below shows a similar tendency with the employment of the IRF pattern. Although the turn-taking is sequentially segmented, there is no notable increase in the responses of students (i.e. see Line 12, Line 16 and Line 20). The teacher executes a rather mechanical exercise where she is mostly defining (by herself) the vocabulary listed in the textbook, thus, clearly creating an intertextual relation: teacher-textbook (Lemke, 2004). As such, the instructor controls the type of interactions that the students engage in, not allowing them to infer the meaning on their own nor to ask each other questions related to the meaning of the words. She does, however, provide a series of explanations that lead students to retrieve general meanings of the vocabulary. This can be seen in Line 15, Line 19 and Line 25 (see Table 4.2 below).

Table 4.2.

*Teacher student interaction. T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking*

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
11	T	Que es “view”?	Initiation
12	S4	Vista	Response
13	T	Aha vista, exactamente “vista”...mhm	Feedback
14	SS	<i>(laughter)</i>	
15	T	Chores! What is chores? Algo que seguramente les choca hacer en su casa...	Initiation
16	SS	Quehacer!	Response
17	T	Haber, haber todos hablaron al mismo tiempo	
18	SS	<i>(laughter)</i>	
19	T	Sweeping and brooming and cleaning	
20	SS	Quehacer!	Response
21	T	Exactamente esos son los chores...	Feedback

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22	S5	Aghhh!	
23	T	Qué es”dust”?	Initiation
24	S6	Yo no veo!	
25	T	“Dust”! que si llegamos aquí después de vacaciones y le hacemos así a todo...	
26	S7	Sacudir!	Response
27	S8	Polvo!	Response

---

### 4.3.2 The constraining classroom layout

From a multimodal perspective, it is worth mentioning, that this setting presents several furniture arrangement constraints making joint focus difficult (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Students can easily ‘hide’ behind the computer screens or hardly look at the board. Figure 4.2 provides an angle of the classroom layout and its represented participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 2003). As depicted in the photo, the vectors of the participants’ gaze are distributed in different directions due to the classroom arrangement (ibid., 2006). It seems that the lack of joint focus may be a direct result of the non-traditional/functional furniture arrangement within the classroom space.



*Figure 4.2.* Class with little joint focus: disoriented participants’ gaze.

We can see that the non-strategic use of space is a mode that has not received adequate attention within this particular learning context, and it produces a negative effect for the learning/teaching process. In contrast to the typical classroom, Figure 4.3 illustrates the actual teaching context of the classroom under analysis where this semiotic ‘hot zone’ is absent. Students all face in different directions, computer screens block the view of the teacher, and the white board is placed behind computer terminals.

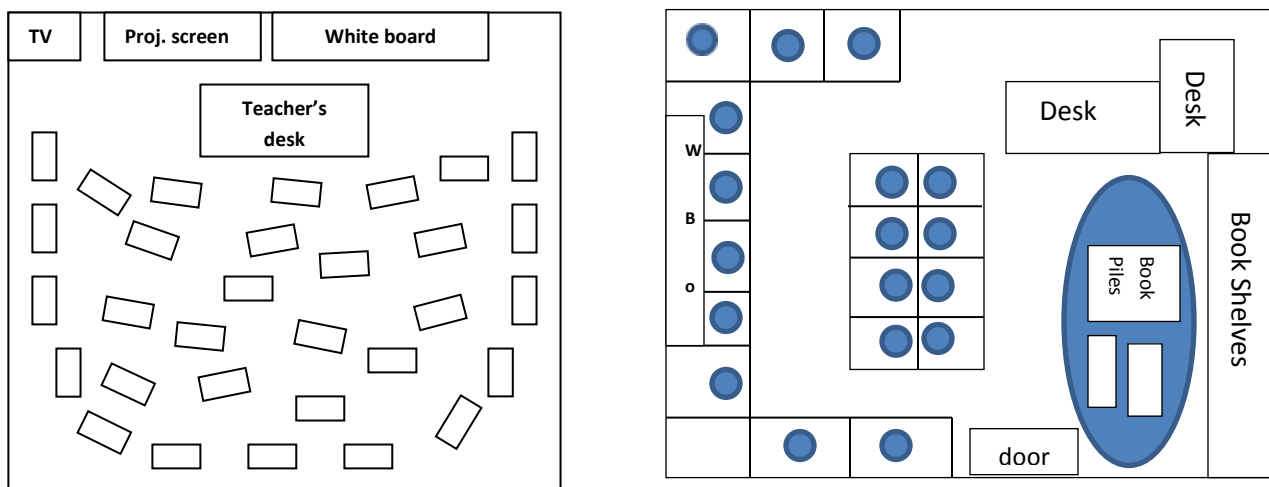


Figure 4.3. Typical classroom layout versus classroom layout under investigation.

In this case, furniture plays a significant role since it is part of classroom interaction, and works as a structured mode (Norris, 2004). The furniture constraints and the lack of a designated classroom for the English subject may be interpreted by students as ‘English is not taken as a serious subject at school’.

#### 4.3.3 On the (dis)empowerment of the teacher

Regarding the teacher’s role as the expert, a series of significant interactions are found (see Table 4.3 below). During one of the phases of the lesson, students stop paying attention to the instructor. This presents a conundrum for the teacher since she perceives this interaction (or the lack of it) to be disempowering her authority as the ‘stage performer’. Such a moment presents a ritualistic failure since students begin to talk and concern themselves

with homework from other subjects (Prabhu, 1992; Quantz, et. al, 2011). The linguistic behavior changes considerably modifying the communication exchange (Green & Weade, 1990). This can be observed from Line 3 to Line 7 (see Table 4.3), which represents a linguistic interaction that takes place primarily between the teacher and student number 2. Students can easily engage in this clandestine behavior since, as previously mentioned, they can easily conceal deviant behavior behind the computer screens and ignore the performance of the teacher (see Fig. 4.4 below) (ibid., 1992).

Figure 4.4 depicts two separate groups of students who are engaged in work for other courses. The two students in the center of the image are particularly salient participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005; Wysocki, 2011): the young woman in a red coat and white glasses (center shot) is cutting out figures and pasting them onto a collage. The triad behind her appears to be engaged in the same activity, yet it is unclear as to whether they are all preparing for the same group presentation or if they have separate agendas. What is clear, however, is that they have competing aims and objectives with those of the teacher since the material being used was never requested by the English instructor. While we might acknowledge that such clandestine activity is not entirely uncommon in any classroom when students have pressing obligations, further evidence exists in the same image that this apparent lack of motivation is endemic to the classroom context.

Once these actions built up a rather tense atmosphere, a ‘move’ is made by the teacher as an attempt to gain more attention from the students. This was achieved when the typical linguistic thematic interaction (Lemke, 2004) was violated through the inadvertent introduction of a taboo topic (Prabhu, 1992). The lesson move begins with the teacher providing a grammatical explanation of the various meanings of the lexical item “can”, its meaning as a verb and as a noun (see Table 4.3, Line 7) and how colloquially it may also

refer to the word ‘toilet’ (Line 9). As this move is enacted, we can see the reaction of a student in Figure 4.5. The image is composed by a series of still shots displaying how one of the students attempts to cover her face with a notebook; revealing her discomfort towards the task of brainstorming a colloquial equivalent of ‘toilet’ in Spanish (Line 13 to Line 22).

Table 4.3 *Teacher student interaction. T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking.*

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
3	T	Comida...Yes...y “can” que significa?...	
4	S2	Poder!	
5		Si ya lo vimos como verbo y me alegra que todos estén muy ...emocionados y ¡ay ya me lo sé! “poder”!	
6	SS	(laughter) Pero!...el problema con el inglés es que tiene palabras que a veces funcionan como verbos y a veces como sustantivos como “nouns”...mhm...como verbo “can” significa...me acaban de decir:...	Teacher providing grammatical explanation for the word “can”
7	T	Poder!	
8	SS	Poder, exactamente pero como como sustantivo, qué es un sustantivo? se acuerdan qué es un sustantivo?...Un objeto, una cosa, como sustantivo “can” quiere decir “lata”...y vulgarmente “can” como sustantivo también quiere decir el WC...	Inadvertent introduction of a taboo topic with the explanation of can colloquially meaning WC too.
9	T	Wooodo...	
10	S3	Entonces si voy...si alguien me dice este...”I am going to the can”	
11	T	I am going to the can ( <i>whisper</i> )	
12	S4	No? cómo dicen vulgarmente ir al baño en español?	Teacher eliciting students to think about examples of colloquial expressions for going to the bathroom in Spanish.
13	T	Ir al pipisroom ( <i>whisper</i> )	
14	S5	(laughter)	
15	SS	Ahá, ahá...qué otro, qué otro dicen?	
16	T	No... excusado?	
17	S6	No, no, no pero vulgarmente, bueno no vulgar	
18	T		

- no...pero...coloquialmente?
- 19 S6 El retrete?
- 20 T Hay otro que dicen...este...aha...cómo cómo?
- 21 S7 Ir a mi arbolíto!
- Exacto! El del arbolito, así así es como suenan si ustedes dicen “I’m going to the can”...así igual pero viene de ahí que “can” es como un contenedor no?
- 22 T Y si ustedes eh, llegan a ver una coca en lata es un “coke” en “can”...mhm? Ok? Entonces vamos a ver, aquí vamos a ver el “can” pero como sustantivo acuérdense que significa lata
- Teacher’s feedback towards the colloquial equivalency in Spanish for the expression:
- 

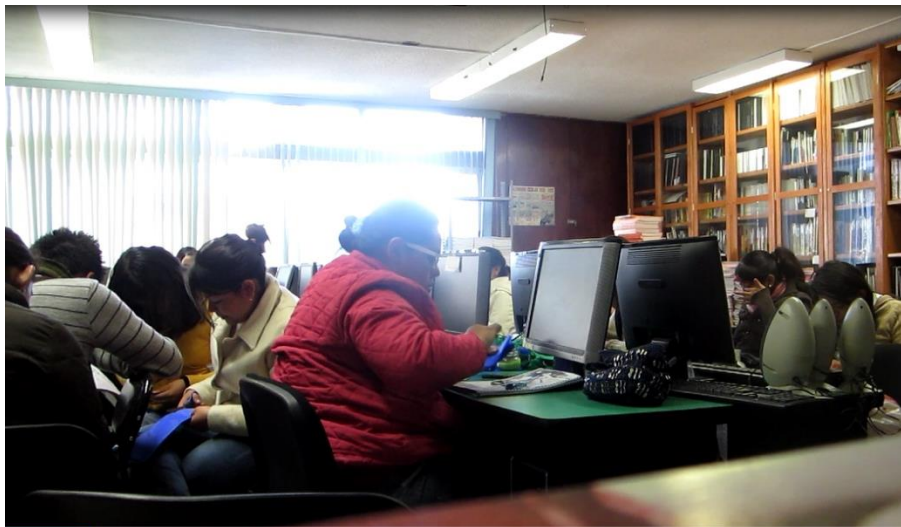


Figure. 4.4. Students engaging in homework during class time



Figure. 4.5. Student’s reaction to the introduction of a taboo topic (L15 Table 4.3)

Once the teacher recaptures the students’ attention, she recovers control of the context (Van Dijk, 1997) (see Line 13, Table 4.3). As a consequence, in the following

phase of the lesson (see Table 4.4), the teacher uses the control of action and mind by managing the desired social symbolic resources, such as knowledge, education or esteem (ibid.). In this excerpt, the teacher gives feedback towards the pronunciation performance of the students (Line 75). As participants review the vocabulary from an exercise in the book, students began to ask questions about the topic (Line 72). The teacher corrects student 22 (see Line 72 to Line 77 in Table 4.4 below) emphasizing the appropriate pronunciation for double “o”, which may present pronunciation difficulties to Spanish speakers. Power is manifested when the teacher presents a contextualized example of how Spanish speakers, nowadays, pronounce correctly the word “google” (line 77 and 79) since it has become a common internet browser and how also people have begun to pronounce it correctly without necessarily using the English language.

Table 4.4.

*Teacher’s feedback on pronunciation as a symbolic desired resource; exemplifying the control of action and mind in the classroom (Van Dijk, 1997). T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking*

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
67	T	Ahá! algo que esta empaquetado, las galletas no? Por ejemplo...ok, y qué es "spoons"? es algo con lo que comen...	Teacher explaining the meaning of a vocabulary item from the exercise in the textbook ( <b>Initiation</b> )
68	SS	Cucharas!	<b>Response</b>
69	T	Cucharas, yes!...y "forks"?, también se parece a las cucharas	<b>Feedback - Initiation</b>
70	S21	Tenedor	<b>Response</b>
71	T	Tenedor yes! "forks"	<b>Feedback</b>

---

72	S22	What is “ <b>espons</b> ”?	
73	T	...eh?	Student pronouncing the word spoon when asking its meaning
74	S22	What is “ <b>espons</b> ”?	
75	T	<b>SpOOons!</b>	
76	S22	Ah!	Teacher correcting student’s pronunciation on the use of double “oo” while giving a sound example by using a common English influenced word
77	T	Spoons = cuchara, acuérdense que <b>doble “oo”</b> se pronuncia como una “ <b>u</b> ”, apoco dicen <b>gOgle</b> ? haber <b>gOgoléa esto!</b> ...	
78	SS	<i>(laughter)</i>	
79	T	Ahora ya dicen “ <b>google</b> ”, búscalo en “google”, ahí si se les sale lo <b>gringo</b> verdad?, aha! ok...y luego ah...forks son los tenedores y knives?...	

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In sum, the analyses of the communicative modes in the BINE lesson unveiled the establishment, negotiation and maintenance of asymmetrical relationships (Breen, 2001a) among participants, how power manifests in classroom contexts in different manners using a variety of modes, how disembodied modes may influence teaching and learning practices, the manner in which participant roles and authority are established and negotiated. Depending on the contextual contingencies, power can be exercised by different participants within the lesson as they adopt different strategies and multimodal resources, including discourse structures and classroom artifacts. The analyses explore that there is a tendency in the management of power that requires a constant control of context (van Dijk, 1997).

#### 4.3.4 Affordances of multimodal/intertextual interaction

The following sections, present the analyses of a lesson within the BUAP context. As such, in this section, a series of communicational modes throughout the EFL lesson under investigation are analyzed. In contrast with the analyses presented previously, there are distinct examples of classroom culture and management of authority in this context. Thus, the following images along with their linguistic representation and analyses describe how the EFL teacher tends to use embodied modes to reinforce her linguistic descriptions. This data demonstrates that communicational modes commonly go beyond spoken language when participants make meanings (Norris, 2004).

Table 4.5 shows how the teacher's linguistic utterances in combination with her use of the whiteboard realize an intertextual move. In Line 9 of Table 4.5, the instructor attempts to link previous class content with the introduction of the new unit title, which she writes on the board. As such, the new textbook unit introduced verbally, "dying for their beliefs" acts an *intertext* between the text written on the whiteboard as well as the textbook text (see Figure 4.6) (Lemke, 2004). In addition, the manner in which the teacher uses space on the whiteboard is significant in its meaning making potential as the teacher designs a polarized arrangement when utilizing the 'Given' and the 'New' zones of the board strategically (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). According to visual semiotics and the *composition* of textual space (see section 2.3.1.1 in chapter 2), the teacher places the words, 'conventional medical treatment' within the area of Given information and the words, 'nonconventional medical treatment' within the area of New information (see Figure 4.6) (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). That is to say, the teacher creates meanings through the design of textual space which positions 'conventional medical treatment' as "common-sense and self-evident" while simultaneously positioning 'nonconventional medical treatment' as

“problematic, contestable, the information at issue” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 189). It is worth noticing that the teacher seems to be reinforcing the textbook’s visual representation of ‘conventional’ and ‘nonconventional’ medicine, which polarizes these concepts in the same manner that the teacher does through the design of textual space (ibid.). The textbook visually represents conventional medicines as traditional prescription drugs while nonconventional medicines are represented visually as herbs, teas, and odd shaped pills with alternative names like ‘Ginkgo Biloba’ (see Figure 4.6). As such, intertextual meanings are conveyed that interact with: the audience (students) as the teacher strategically employs one of the classroom’s most salient and symbolic pieces of furniture, i.e. the whiteboard in conjunction with the textbook and embodied, verbal utterances during her stage performance (Goffman, 1981; Lemke, 2004). The presence of this symbolic artifact shapes the production of lesson knowledge (Jewitt, 2008). The teacher directs the students’ gaze with a deictic type action towards the whiteboard, learners then follow the motion of her hand to exhibit the information previously written and mark a strong transition between units assuring the name of the new topic (see Figure 4.7) (Norris, 2004; Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Table 4.5

*Teacher’s introduction of the new textbook unit (Transition of discussion). T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking*

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
5	T	That he writes every week?	
6	SS	Yes	

- 
- 7 T Mhm...and did the priest believe that?
- 8 SS No
- 9 T What did he say?... I don't know why you come to church, and then the priest believed that Frankie wrote to his daughter. Ok, well ... that was unit two. We talked about "dreams never die" but today we are going to start something different and that is "Dying for their beliefs". Why are we presenting that? "Dying for their beliefs"
- Teacher points at the board where the title of the new textbook unit is (written on the board at the opening of the class).
- 

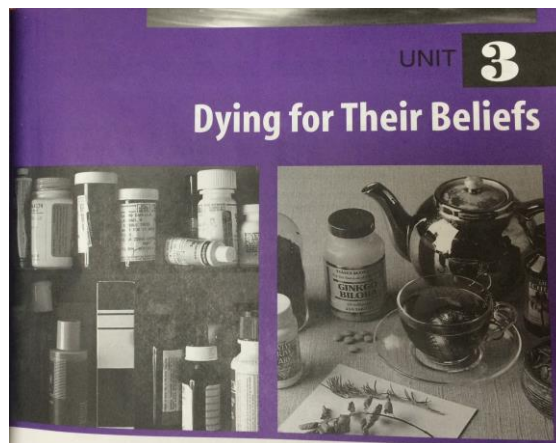
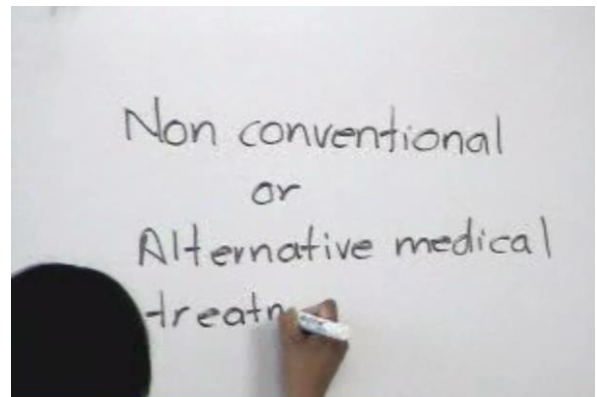
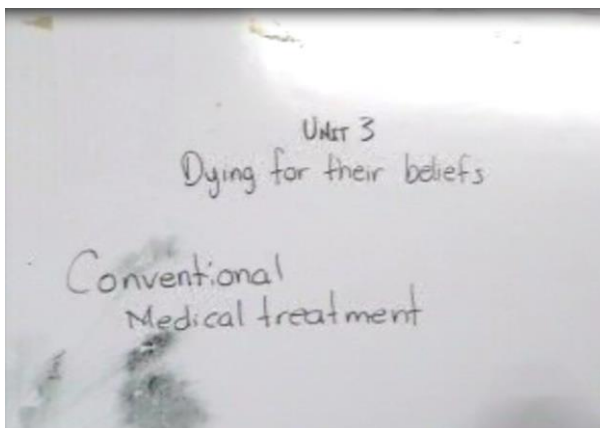


Fig. 4.6. Teacher's strategic use of whiteboard to reinforce textbook meanings.



*Figure 4.7* Teacher directs students' gaze (attention) to the board by pointing at the unit title (text).

Similarly, there is another phase of the lesson where the teacher uses embodied modes as an aide for clear instruction (Norris, 2004). As displayed on the still shot sequence below (Figure 4.8), the EFL teacher makes use of both of her hands attempting to reinforce the linguistic instructions given to students. These commands are found in Table 4.6, in which the teacher asks students to work in pairs (Line 18). According to Norris (2004), modes (in this case the embodied teacher's hand movement) are not expressed in a continuous fashion. They have rest periods or pauses that anticipate or follow activity in the mode. The teacher's symbolic prompt of 'working in pairs' is not continuous. It starts and ends from a rest position as shown in the first and last image in the picture sequence in Figure 4.8. In the case of the second and third picture it is clear the contrast in the hands' position and movement. This allows participants to perceive communicative modal hints and respond successfully to them. Thus, students focus on a small amount of information and immediately shift focus to other modes. The result of this alternation of embodied modes or signs is that attention is drawn to a mode at certain moments (when there is a shift). These modal shifts are quite significant when observing the communicative signs to

which participants learn to respond to as part of their cultural classroom knowledge (Breen 2001a; Green & Weade, 1990; Prabhu, 1992).



Fig. 4.8. Teacher using her hands to reinforce linguistic instructions.

Table 4.6 *Teacher instructing students to work in pairs and assigning teams. T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking*

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
15	S1	We had to look for something about alternative medicine	
16	T	Aha! You had to look for some information about Non-conventional or alternative medical treatment. Did you do it?	
17	SS	Yes	
18	T	Yes? Ok, so I'm going to ask you to work in pairs and compare your medical treatments. You remember that I gave you like guidelines to look for that information, what kind of medical treatment? how that works?.. how can that be used? Did you do that? Did you underline? Yeah, thank you. Some of you didn't. So, if you didn't do it, you're going to identify that in pairs. I'm going to ask you to identify the main aspects about that treatment that you brought. So, you work together please? Two, two. Can you work together? Here we have Cristina, you two, you two, you two. Then, can you work Areli? Can you work together, please? Here you two.	Teacher moving her hands in a parallel manner to instruct students to work in pairs as she assigns the teams as well.

#### **4.3.5 Authority reallocation and disruption of the communicative exchange (IRF pattern)**

In this section, a specific phase of the lesson under examination is analyzed. An unexpected turn in the symmetry of relationships within this communicative event results in an authority shift (Breen, 2001b; van Dijk, 1997). As noticed, there is a common tendency for the teacher to have control of the lesson aims, content and knowledge. However, in this phase of the lesson, the teacher's role of 'expert' is unintentionally threatened, which causes a disruption in the classroom culture (Green & Weade, 1990). The cause of the disruption is discussed in further detail below.

Preceding the classroom interaction in which the teachers role of 'expert' is challenged (see Table 4.7), the usual presence of the IRF pattern in the classroom discourse is prevalent (van Lier, 2001). The linguistic representation in Line 21 corresponds to a moment when the teacher elicits students to provide examples of alternative medical treatments (*"Any other medicine or treatment, any other treatment that you have?"* [Initiation]). Then, student 5 participates by giving the example of "Chocotherapy" in Line 22, although he cannot finish articulating his statement since he does not know what the translation of "nutrientes" is in English. Student 5 asks the teacher for the translation (see Line 22), yet the instructor is unable to provide adequate assistance. Figure 4.9 shows the embodiment of the instructor's mental or emotional state due to this unwanted detour in the discussion. This interaction seems to give her a sense of discomfort, which is made evident by her facial expression, particularly the squinted eyes and frown (Figure 4.9 corresponds to Line 23 in Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Teacher asks to the group about the translation of “*nutrientes*” in English. T= teacher, S+#= one student participating, SS= several students talking

Line	Speaker	Text	Observations
21	T	Any other medicine or treatment, any other treatment that you have?, just the name because some of you have just the name about that information about those.. ah treatments, the names that you have?	<b>Eliciting SS to talk about different medical treatments. (Initiation)</b>
22	S5	We were talking about <b>chocotherapy</b> , yeah, chocolate is used on your body for you, you on your skin, to, to, to eh, how do you say? to better the texture and also to add the... <b>How do you say nutrientes?</b> Or for the skin to.. acquire the nutrientes.. <b>How can I say nutrientes?</b>	<b>Response (Sub-Initiation)</b>
23	T	How can we say <i>nutrientes</i> guys?... I think you have a word there. <b>In your homework you have that word.</b> So, what can you tell me about it?..when we talk about food maybe?. No? you have that word. No? <b>nutrientes?</b> Can some of you look that word in the <b>dictionary? Also look at your homework</b> because I saw that you have something about that, isn't that yours Areli? In your homework? Nutrientes? You have something about that?	<b>IRF pattern disrupted, due to the lack of feedback. Pause. Teacher elicits students to look for the word “nutrientes” in their homework/notes.</b>
24	S2	Ahhh...no, I don't think so...	
25	T	Nutrientes? Someone? how you say nutrientes?...	
26	S3	Nutrient!	<b>A student finds the word in a dictionary</b>
27	T	Oh nutrients then!	<b>The teacher makes the word into its plural form</b>
28	S5	Yeah! So, Chocotherapy makes with chocolate, then the skin absorbs all the <b>nutrients</b> that the chocolate provides for make better	<b>The student rephrases his</b>

the texture of all the skin and also for, for making people relax.

**statement.**

29 T Mhm! So we have talked about this a type of medical treatments? Now, What can we?...What do we understand by conventional medical treatments? What's that?

The teacher points to the treatments written on the board. **Initiation**

---



*Fig. 4.9* Teacher displays discomfort when a student asks for a translation

This communicative exchange can be seen as an aberration within the typical IRF ritual, which served as the catalyst for an unintentional shift in power and authority (van Dijk, 1997; van Lier, 2001). Student 5 is solely responsible for the shift as he employs a highly unusual **Sub-Initiation** as part of his **IRF Response**. While his question appears to be a genuine request for assistance to the teacher, her inability to respond creates a face threat as her traditional role of ‘expert’ or ‘knower’ is challenged. In line 23, we see that the instructor asks if someone knows the translation or has it in their homework; as a consequence, she implicitly grants control and power over a desired symbolic resource to students, which is knowledge (Van Dijk, 1997).

The teacher begins to scan the room with a deictic sign by pointing her finger as an open gesture for anyone with the answer to participate as she nervously produces the long strand of questions in Line 23 (see table 4.7); however, the knowledge gap persists, which seems to make the course instructor increasingly uncomfortable. Finally, the motion of her hand stops as she creates a direct vector with her pointer finger and designates a specific student to respond, “*I saw that you have something about that, isn’t that yours Areli?*” (see Figure 4.10 below). In doing this, she returns to the IRF pattern, hoping to reestablish ritual and order to the classroom culture.



*Figure 4.10* Teacher’s request and pointing motion towards a specific student (“*I saw that you have something about that, isn’t that yours Areli?*”)

Figure 4.10, as previously mentioned, represents the one on one interaction between student 2 and the teacher; however, careful attention to the image at issue also reveals the disorientation of the students’ gaze vectors. According to Scollon and Scollon (2003), “key concepts in representing participants in pictures are the participants and vectors which relate them” (p. 87). Hence, the lack of joint focus displayed by the learners’ gaze reveals

the interaction to be in a rather confusing moment. Although the image does not allow us to identify the direction of the two last students' vectors at the end of the row or the rest of the class, we can still observe the gaze direction of the first four students. There is an evident contrast between Figure 4.7 (see section 4.3.4 above) and Figure 4.10. That is, the ritualized procedures for communicating (generally embodied in this case) following a common exchange pattern (IRF) guide learners' towards a "clear" focus of attention and task understanding (Norris, 2004; Prabhu, 1992; Quantz, et. al, 2011; van Lier, 2001). Thus, single direction in students' gaze vectors, indicated by the teacher, result in a functional joint focus (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In the case of Figure 4.7, this is achieved as learners look at the board. On the other hand, in the case of Figure 4.10, the first student (from left to right) is looking in an upper-right direction (without certainty if she is looking at the board or the teacher). The second participant is facing towards the board. The third participant (by observing his posture) is likely to be following the teachers' instructions by looking for the translation in his homework/dictionary as his gaze is directed downwards. Finally, the fourth participant's gaze vector is oriented directly at the teacher. Therefore, we can conclude that the discrepancy between the instructions, questions, requests and suggestions made by the teacher all simultaneously occurring in Line 23, and the disruption of the IRF pattern, have a major impact in learners' orientation, (re)actions and learning.

The last phase of this communication exchange is represented in Line 29 (Table 4.7). This line represents the resolution of the discussion's disruption when the teacher recovers the rhythm of the IRF pattern. This becomes evident as she asks, "*What can we?...What do we understand by conventional medical treatments? What's that?*" as a clear **Initiation**. As Prabhu (1992) points out, classroom conflict and resolution are part of

the classroom dynamics or else it would be impossible for the class to function. The successful realization of such resolution vary from one teacher to another. Hence, as an act of “resolution” and authority recovery,

Finally, this phase of the lesson ends with successful conflict resolution and communication reconciliation. It is important to point out that “social and personal dimensions are so strong in some classrooms that they subordinate the pedagogic ones” (Prahbu, 1992, p. 232). In this case, the active interaction between the teacher and students to fulfill a joint objective (finding a translation for ‘nutrientes’) and the embodiment of her communicative prompts exemplify classroom dynamics. Although this brief lesson event occurred in a matter of a few minutes, it becomes evident that the interaction had differing and multiple meanings between the various participants involved in the negotiation. According to van Lier (2001), analyzing communication and interaction in classroom life sheds light on a macro as well as on a micro level. Research should have a holistic focus, yet it should also focus on the smallest details, “allow[ing] us not to generalize but to particularize, that is, to adapt our skills, ideas, and strategies to the changing circumstances and the multifarious influences of the context in which the investigated processes occur” (ibid., p. 90). Close attention to the teacher’s (re)actions had a great impact on students’ overall (re)actions and learning outcomes throughout the lesson. However, this general result is the sum of the various details involved in all the participants’ interactions (teacher-student, student-student, board-students/teacher, textbook- students/teacher).

#### **4.4 Chapter conclusion**

To conclude, this section presented data with various examples of authority management and multimodal prompts. It described how students and teachers draw on their cultural understandings of modes to communicate and negotiate the meaning of classroom events. Also, how power and authority may present shifts and rotate within the participants during the communicative exchanges. As such, examples of deviant/reconciliatory behavior, linguistic patterns, and layout constraints were part of the lessons analyzed as well (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, 2006; Prabhu, 1992; van Lier; 2001). Finally, the analyses also provided evidence that spoken language (although perceived as the primary mode in interactional events) along with embodied prompts and artifacts/seating/spatial arrangement have a significant effect on learning outcomes and classroom events (Norris, 2004).

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

This study aimed to identify what factors influence the construction and maintenance of classroom culture. Therefore, this chapter presents the concluding sections for the current research project. First, a discussion on the key findings in relation to the research questions of the study will be addressed. These conclusions are drawn from close observation of classroom roles, artifacts, rituals, and power relations as factors in the construction and maintenance of classroom culture. The limitations of the study will be presented, and the last section will provide a brief conclusion for this chapter.

### **5.1 Discussion of key findings**

Based on the theoretical framework presented in chapter two, this study focused on key concepts which are instrumental in classroom culture. It is worth mentioning, that generalizations for EFL lessons cannot be drawn since contextual contingencies must be taken into account. The analyses made evident that the establishment of asymmetrical relationships (Breen, 2001b) among participants did not provide equal lesson inclusion. In different moments during the lessons, either embodied modality or linguistic interaction displayed significant prompts as to who was in control of the lesson and who had to follow instructions. The dynamics of power negotiation demonstrated to depend greatly on the institution (policies, infrastructure, objectives and perceptions of English courses, among others). Thus, each participant managed classroom events in different manners during the lessons studied.

The teacher/researcher within the BINE context encountered a variety of (dis)empowerment situations. As a result, they were addressed as follows: 1) the instructor

negotiated such situations by the use of an embodied mode. The symbolic posture attempted to express a sense of peace and calm to students as an opening lesson ritual. 2) The teacher introduced a taboo topic as a defense mechanism to draw learners' attention and re-capture their interest towards to the content of the EFL lesson by using cultural information. This demonstrates that the teachers' control of context takes more assertive multimodal forms imposing authority through the use of intonation and symbolic gestures.

Power relations are structured and managed differently within the BUAP context. There is a common tendency from this particular teacher to use the IRF pattern and embodied modes to reinforce instruction to the class. The employment of ritualized and explicit commands or instructions made by the teacher resulted in clear attention and task understanding on the students' side, which is the case during the first part of the lesson. As such, ritualization plays a significant role in the construction of classroom culture. Throughout the data analyses, it is evident that schools are regulated places in which participants have certain roles, and rituals are important in reinforcing these roles within classroom culture.

On the other hand, the rituals that define the role of the teacher or student may be suddenly disturbed. Specific behavior is expected from both sides, and if these expectations are not met, the classroom environment becomes unsettling. The disruption of rituals during lesson interaction is exemplified in a phase within the BUAP setting. The moment takes place as a learner 're-initiates' the IRF pattern, thus contradicting the premise that during the IRF pattern the teacher is unequivocally in charge (van Lier, 2001). Instructors always have the power to decide when to initiate and close communication sequences "making it extremely hard, if not impossible, in the IRF format for the student to ask

questions, to disagree, to self-correct, and so on” (ibid., p. 95). In this particular lesson the learner unintentionally re-arranges the communication turn-taking as he exposes a knowledge gap. Van Lier (2001) claims that the social world is governed by rules that allow certain moves to be made while disallowing (or disfavoring) others. These rules are often tacit and ambiguous, and their precise interpretation or definition have to be negotiated in interaction. The linguistic interaction teacher-student in this phase of the lesson is negotiated in a class-ensemble (a macro level). The language instructor grants the management of a desired symbolic resource to students, which is ‘knowledge’ (van Dijk, 1997). That is, she concedes the power of ‘information control’ and the identity as ‘expert in charge of input’. This moment produces certain discomfort to the teacher and in the classroom atmosphere making conflict resolution necessary. According to Prabhu (1992), “an important concern for teachers and learners in the classroom is their sense of security and the protection of their self-images” (p. 233). During conflict resolution, participants tend to give priority to their self-images/esteem and, at times, leave them to play their roles as teachers or learners (ibid.).

Although this project did not seek to compare two contrasting institutions, it was found that there were many examples in which both locations differed. This is the case in the examples of classroom conflict. There is a significant contrast in what these conflicts consisted of. The teacher in the BUAP context employs suggestions, commands and questions (regarding information) as reconciliatory tools to reestablish the communication patterns and lure attention away from the knowledge gap. On the other hand, within the BINE setting, the teacher/researcher is presented with a different type of conflict. All the class’ attention is lost and drawn to an implicit/invisible presence of another teacher’s

authority as learners focus on homework from a different subject; as a result, the loss of attention is the teacher/researcher's concern. These are clear situations where conflict resolution also becomes part of the classroom culture. Thus, as previously mentioned, classroom conflict and resolution must become part of the classroom dynamics or else it would be impossible for the class to function (Prabhu, 1990). Common understanding among individuals and how to address these situations are perceived and managed differently from one instructor to another; "teachers come to terms with learners in a way that least erodes their status, in their own eyes, in the learners' eyes, and perhaps in the eyes of fellow teachers and superiors" (ibid., p. 233).

Apart from communication exchanges, various artifacts were also crucial in classroom interactions. According to the data, the manner in which the participants referred to or managed the artifacts nurtured patterns of behavior and the construction of knowledge in much the same manner that culture is formed in other contexts (Green & Weade, 1990). The settings studied displayed significant use of the board by the teacher and utilization of textbooks, (English/other subjects') homework and dictionaries for intertextual connections, turning such artifacts into intertextual entities (Lemke, 2004). These artifacts also served to indicate different phases of the lessons, clarify instructions, provide additional information to the lesson as well as display participants' attitudes towards the class contents, such as (lack of) interest.

This study addressed classroom culture from a multimodal/critical discourse analysis perspective (Jewitt, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Norris, 2004; van Dijk, 1997). As such, multimodality served as a functional approach to describe and interpret communication and its representation beyond language in

classrooms. Also, the employment of multimodality marked a tendency in which visual elements and their context are very important features as they contribute to the global experience (Jewitt, 2008; Wysocki, 2004). From this point of view, the analyses of each semiotic mode included embodied and disembodied elements in institutional settings. It was observed how teachers, learners, artifacts and physical classroom arrangement communicate and project beliefs, policies, objectives and meaning negotiation. Overall, the use of multimodality to study both contexts explored the nature of a complex genre such as classroom interactions, which is characterized by a rich variety of multimodal *texts* (Jewitt, 2008; van Dijk, 1997; Wysocki, 2011).

Classroom discourse analysis demonstrates that classrooms are social situations in which learning opportunities arise when the culture allows everyone to participate. Culture, in the classrooms studied, presented participants with different lesson dynamics. However, it was evident that power manifests itself in a variety of manners and each one may facilitate interactions or constrain them. In a lesson such as the one in the BINE context, the power of the teacher's identity as the 'expert' was stronger due to the nature of the textbook content. This included a significant amount of vocabulary not known by the learners. From this view, CCDA revealed how cultural behavior configures actions and interactions in the overall events of classroom life such as whole class or small group interaction, teacher-student or student-student talk, which may be formal or informal (Green & Weade, 1990). In this manner, the lesson carried out at the BUAP displayed different power dynamics in communication. 'Talk' was less strained due to the kind of lesson and learners' English level. Although the teacher controlled the turns in the communicative exchanges, students were elicited to provide information about the topic, which made possible the construction of classroom dialogue.

It is important to point out that previous studies have demonstrated that classroom culture, power negotiation and ritualization can interfere or facilitate language learning; hence, various educational dynamics may be modified or improved to provide more learning opportunities to language learners (Jewitt, 2008). The current study was based on past research findings and methodological techniques in order to achieve its aims (Jewitt, 2008; Green & Weade, 1990; Prabhu, 1992). It was meant to raise awareness and understand that learning affordances “are constructed across time, groups, and events” (Gee & Green, 1998, 119). Literacy and identity as key concepts also help us understand that knowledge constructed in classrooms (as secondary institutions) shapes, and is shaped by, the discursive activity and social practices of members (Gee, 1998; Gee & Green, 1998). The aim of the present study was also to realize how, over time, the presence of couplets such as: conflict and resolution, communicative patterns and their disruption, embodied modes and disembodied elements, become part of the participants’ literacies as they learn to conduct themselves in various situations and manage different semiotic resources for pedagogical purposes. Finally, teachers and students’ should understand that opportunities for learning are not only affected by participants within classrooms per se; but also influenced by “the actions of actors beyond classroom settings (e.g., school districts, book publishers, curriculum developers, legislators, and community members)” (Gee & Green, 1998, 119).

## **5.2 Limitations of the study**

One of the major limitations of this research was the inability to collect the actual participants’ responses to the analyzed texts. Another concern was to find more examples of significant classroom interaction activity. However, due to space constraints this project only focused on the two locations described in chapter three.

The search for substantial classroom activity during lessons is unpredictable. The fact that this study involved different institutional contexts made us take into account that data may not always display the activity theoretically predicted. The amount of events that did not take place during the lessons observed for this study might be considered infinite. As such, we might be tempted to conclude that one could never fully define and describe the factors that significantly contribute to the construction of classroom culture.

On the other hand, the similarities that could be observed between the different classrooms in regards to events that contributed to the construction of the classroom culture were quite significant. It shows that there is, to a certain degree, a toolbox of strategies that participants draw upon when participating in classroom life. The more that studies like these observe and describe such events the more this will contribute to the field's understanding of how classroom culture is constructed and maintained.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter presented the closing discussion to data previously analyzed in the study. The key findings described how classroom interactions have a significant impact in all participants involved, including the teacher/researcher of the present study. Also, how by closely observing significant activity within classrooms, we can raise awareness and understanding towards teaching and learning practices. Classroom culture functions implicitly and explicitly at different times depending on the rituals present within lesson dynamics. This research encountered institutional activity that was not expected or anticipated through theory yet enriched the study in various dimensions. Finally, this thesis project terminates by agreeing with Prabhu (1992):

Perhaps there are ways of helping teachers to try to articulate their pedagogic notions and intuitions, such that the process of articulation acts as a form of exploration, and any success in articulation helps to increase confidence as well as ability for further exploration. Perhaps specialists should themselves take teachers' theories seriously and interact with them in the way they interact with each other's theories. I do not think that specialists in language pedagogy have any better source for their theories than their own notions and intuitions, though of course they are more highly skilled in articulating them and supporting them in academically recognised ways. Perhaps it will be a gain for all of us to acknowledge that...specialists and teachers can benefit through an interaction between their theories. Perhaps teachers will be helped to function as theorists if those who regard themselves as theorists begin to function as teachers (p. 240).

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