Interactional Entanglements: A Frame Analysis of Negotiated Identities in Ethnographic Research on the Language Classroom

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Abstract: This study examines interactional entanglements that occurred during ethnographer-participant interactions in a language classroom. It draws upon Goffman's notion of framing to analyze how research participants use deixis to position the ethnographer vis-à-vis themselves within classroom speech events. The analysis shows that the teacher and students negotiated identities by appealing to the researcher's allegiances within an underlying judicial trial frame. As a marginal native, the ethnographer is particularly susceptible to others' social positioning, which raises questions concerning the very personal involvement of the ethnographer conducting research in an educational setting. This article underscores the argument that impression management is not an obstacle to overcome in managing the Observer's Paradox, but an interactional process that has to be actively managed throughout the ethnographic enterprise.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following email was sent to me by one of the participants in an ethnography of communication I was conducting as part of dissertation research in an educational setting. The research involved a set of students and their teacher, Leslie, in a series of three consecutive sheltered ESL freshman composition courses over one academic year. Leslie sent the email after I asked her how she felt about a particular class session, noticing that she seemed frustrated.

> As I was driving home, I was thinking about class. I wasn't really frustrated by the way class went, and was wondering why you thought I was frustrated (besides Kent's childish behavior and Robin's head on the desk). I guess I am feeling more self-conscious than ever with you observing. I have no idea what you're looking for and keep thinking that your dissertation will state something negative about my teaching. I am tired of being observed, so if you think I look frustrated that may be the reason. I know you mean no harm!!

For me, Leslie's response was disconcerting, as it indicated that she felt threatened and overburdened by my presence on the research site. It further suggested that she needed to delineate clearly defined social boundaries with regard to expectations of me as ethnographer.

As I reflected further on Leslie's response after completing the dissertation, I began to ask myself several questions. Had I clearly explained the goals of my research and my role as

the ethnographer? Had I valued the participants as whole human beings and not solely as objectified research subjects? How and to what extent was I responsible for instigating interactional tensions in the teaching/learning environment? In asking these questions, I felt the need to examine the ways in which the nature of my engagement in ethnographer/participant interactions might have given rise to Leslie's email response.

The present study emerges from these concerns as it examines the entanglements involved in ethnographer/participant interactions. Through frame analysis (Goffman 1974), participants can be seen as drawing upon competing expectations concerning who the ethnographer is and what the various identities are that the ethnographer can assume in the classroom. The research objective in this endeavor is to examine how patterns in language use make certain identities available to the ethnographer within the context of the ongoing activity of the classroom. To achieve this objective, the study draws upon insights from linguistic anthropology, sociology, and discursive psychology as a methodological foundation (e.g., Goffman 1974; Gumperz 1982a, 1982b; Davies & Harré 1990). What is ultimately suggested in this paper is that the tools of discourse analysis might be used by ethnographers to examine and closely monitor the "Observer's Paradox" with respect to specific patterns in language use during participant observation, patterns that can position researchers in difficult and unexpected ways.

2.0 PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT AS ETHNOGRAPHIC TOOL

Much of ethnographic research involves the ethnographer as not only the research analyst but also the research *tool*. This means that the ethnographer is necessarily a very personal part of the phenomenon under investigation as the "main instrument of research" (Wolcott 1974: 116). As LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch (1993) puts it,

> the personal characteristic…most affecting conduct of qualitative research is the investigator's identity as the "essential research instrument"….The identity of data collector mediates all other identities and roles played by the investigator.
>
> (LeCompte, Preissle & Tesch 1993: 91-92)

In this sense, participant observation frequently involves gathering data "by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation, or whatever" (Goffman 1974/1989: 125). Even in the case of the "complete observer" (Gold 1958)—that is, without direct interaction with participants—the ethnographer who consciously chooses to remain at the periphery of the phenomenon under observation, however covertly, still subjects him or herself as research tool to this same set of contingencies.

Because of this inevitably personal involvement, whether at its center or its periphery, the ethnographer can be confronted with three problems related to the management of researcher identity. First, the ethnographer can encounter mistrust on the part of participants with regard to who the ethnographer is and what his or her intentions are. This is often due to participants' fear of potential embarrassment and exposure, primarily involving their perception that "they might be recorded doing something wrong and then might be seen in that dereliction by those with the power to embarrass or punish" (Erickson 1992: 212). The ethnographer might even be viewed by participants as a "spy" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Hume & Mulcock 2004), an "enemy" (Wolcott 1974), or some other type of outsider with suspicious motives. Second, having achieved marginal native status on the scene, the ethnographer can potentially be perceived as an obtrusive presence, perhaps even a pest. That is, the ethnographer's continual intrusions on quotidian interactions along with persistent questions about things that are taken for granted can seem threatening to the personal space of participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Such a

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perception can cause participants to be reticent in engaging with the ethnographer further, thus limiting access to essential insider information. Third, when entering any research site, the ethnographer is necessarily confronted with a "presupposed relational dynamic" among participants, one with which he or she may be unfamiliar (Grills 1998: 5) and within which it might be difficult to secure an accepted identity. That is, the ethnographer enters into a set of preexisting social relations consisting of previous conversations and situations, previously established social roles, as well as ongoing socio-political tensions, contradictions, and explicit conflicts—all of which have nothing initially to do with the ethnographer. Thus, the ethnographic task becomes one of finding an acceptable "fit" among these contingencies, a task that seems particularly daunting in educational settings where the social roles of "teacher" and "student" are rigidly defined, where learning often hinges upon teacher/student interaction, and where there can often exist the already long-held mistrust of the researcher as an intruder.

On any research site, the ethnographer's endeavor involves the strategic management of others' impressions of him or her. It particularly involves the working out of these preexisting constraints by developing dynamic field relations through "changing understandings of self, competing interests, and incompatible demands" (Grills 1998: 6). Such working out constitutes what Goffman (1959) calls "identity work" in conversational interactions. Specifically with regard to participant observation, Goffman has noted that the researcher often has to "get a mix of changing costume, which the natives will accept as a reasonable thing, that isn't complete mimicry, and isn't completely retaining your own identity either" (Goffman 1974/1989: 128). In Peshkin's (1988) view, this type of negotiated dynamic involves assuming not only different "field roles", but also different "subjectivities"—the different permutations of "I"—that the ethnographer and participants must negotiate (cf. Peshkin 2001). It is in this sense that multiple identities for the ethnographer become part of the ethnographer's toolkit, particularly in terms of

how the ethnographer's own subjectivity becomes "entangled in the lives of others" as an integral part of the ethnographic enterprise (Denzin 1997: 27). In this way, the ethnographic enterprise not only requires the intellectual distance of the marginal native but also entails identity negotiation that is bound up in the individual, the personal, the emotional, and the psychological "self" of the ethnographer (Coffey 1999).

Despite this very personal nature, much existing discussion regarding how to conduct ethnography, and more particularly in this case, ethnography of communication, has dealt with identity and impression management in quite impersonal ways (Coffey 1999). The management of the ethnographer's identity is seen as necessary for achieving certain research task goals, rather than as a pervasive aspect of the whole ethnographic pursuit (Coffey 1999: 5). My intention in the present study, then, is to focus on the very visible patterns in the interaction between research participants, including myself as ethnographer of communication in an educational setting, since it is in and through discourse that such personalized impression management is achieved.

Such an analysis highlights the continual demand on the ethnographer to manage potential problems, conflicts, and preexisting constraints not as obstacles to be overcome in getting the research done, but as a necessary set of conditions involved in the ethnographic enterprise. In fact, such an analytical focus is unavoidable if ethnographers of communication in educational settings aim to preempt, mitigate, or resolve identity-related issues as they arise during participant observation and impression management. In the present case, it was the personal concern expressed in Leslie's email that prompted me to consider ethnographer/participant interactions as an important object of study.

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3.0 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON ETHNOGRAPHER/PARTICIPANT INTERACTIONS

The analytical focus on ethnographer/participant interactions has been adopted to varying extents by researchers in educational settings (e.g., Corsaro 1981; Erickson 1992; Hume & Mulcock 2004; Wortham & Gadsen 2004). Hornberger (1995) even explores how ethnographic research in educational settings might benefit from perspectives and research methodologies within the discipline of linguistics, via sociolinguistics and the "close and rich analysis of discourse analysis" (p. 235). In the case of the present study, though, discourse analysis specifically involves an examination of the salient frames that emerged and the linguistic devices that cued them. This type of frame analysis has proven useful in a variety of scholarly literature addressing the critical role between language, identity, and learners' socialization into educational practices (e.g., Kinney 1999; Bryce 2000; Kim 2001; Berard 2005; Aronsson 2006), all drawing from a theoretical framework that takes linguistic choices as doing relational work.

3.1 Language Choice as Relational Work

In taking on this type of discourse analysis, I am concerned with speakers' linguistic choices with regard to *footing* and *social positioning*, two terms used to describe a similar interactional phenomenon involving relational meanings (i.e., meanings surrounding social roles and social relationships). Goffman (1979) uses the term *footing* to imply "a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (p. 5). The relative footing involved in a specific speech event allows interlocutors to construct a frame of reference within which to interpret the relational content of a specific utterance. Similarly, Davies and Harré (1990) use the term *social positioning* to refer to a type of verbal jockeying during which interlocutors assign for each other and assume themselves a variety of social identities and social alignments. What the terms *footing* and *social positioning* both suggest is that social identities are constructed not merely

through one's own "creative self-making" but also through others' perceptions of who one is (Bartlett 2005: 3). I use the term *social positioning* to refer to both phenomena, specifically focusing on how they are dynamically achieved in and through discourse. Following Davies and Harré (1990), I distinguish the term *social role* from *social positioning*, with the former referring to "static, formal, and ritualistic aspects" in speech events (e.g., researcher, teacher, and student) and the latter referring to the dynamic aspects (p. 43)—in this case, identities interlocutors assume and index to others within those roles (e.g., parent knower, witness, and judge).

Such social positioning can be discursively achieved through a variety of linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic signals that Gumperz (1982a, 1992, 1995) collectively terms *contextualization cues*. According to Gumperz (1982a), a *contextualization cue* is defined as "any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions [by the speaker to the addressee]" (p. 31; cf. Levinson 1997). Among the numerous types of contextual cues are *deictics*. These include personal pronouns, spatial and temporal markers, demonstratives, and even elements of the tense-modal-aspect (TMA) system, all of which can serve as contextualization cues because their denotational value is largely contingent upon the relevant aspects of the social context they index. More precisely, they "organize socially, as what is present for both speaker and hearer (and reader and writer), time and distance, and the positions and arrangements of persons with reference to the 'position' of the speaker" (Smith 1990: 56). Scholarly literature that has focused on deictics includes Keogh's (1997) study of inclusive/exclusive pronoun use, along with Hanks' (1992) discussion of indexicals (cf. Sebeok 1990).

3.2 The Present Study

The site for the present study was three freshman composition courses for ESL Engineering majors at Technical University. These courses met twice a week for two hours

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each. The participants in this study included Leslie (LS) the teacher and her 11 nonnative English-speaking writers—2 females and 9 males—from various Asian and African ESL/EFL linguistic backgrounds: Nicky (NK), Ning (NG), Nina (NA), Kent (KN), Robin (RB), Raja (RA), Yvonne (YV), Simon (SM), Yi Liao (YL), Joseph (JS), and Zhao (ZH). Finally, I participated as not only the ethnographer but also as the writing tutor and classroom discussion facilitator.

The data consist of two hours of audiotaped and transcribed interactions between Leslie and her students during a single class day. These interactions were chosen for analysis for several reasons. First, the interactions occurred during a class session in the second academic term (i.e., approximately four months into participant observation). During this intermediate stage in the data collection process I was well into establishing participant relationships, and tensions between such relationships began to play out more visibly in the classroom. Second, such tensions came to a head during this particular class as various and competing patterns in social positioning emerged during classroom speech events. In fact, it was the day following this class that Leslie sent me the email expressing her frustration with my continual presence.

The classroom interactions are analyzed through "deictic mapping". Wortham (1996) notes that deictic mapping is a methodological tool that allows the discourse analyst to illustrate how deictics converge and pattern out across the discursive space of an interaction, thus revealing the subtle patterning that "can play an important role in determining the interactional significance of an utterance" (p. 336). Field notes (140 hours of face-to-face in-class participant observation), participant interviews (12 hours total), and audiotaped classroom interactions recorded on other class days (5 hours total) provide the relevant context for interpretation of the discourse.

Here, the unit of analysis is the speech event, a recognizably bound activity that is "directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech" (Hymes 1989: 56). Under analysis is

one frequent type of speech event, which Leslie termed "on board elicitation" or

"brainstorming". This event involved Leslie eliciting responses from students and writing their

ideas on the board, after which she used these responses to construct a sentence or group of

sentences as the model for student essays. The results of the discourse analysis reveal three

simultaneously operative frames.

4.0 OPERATIVE FRAMES WITHIN THE BRAINSTORMING EVENT

In the classroom interaction under investigation, Leslie begins by explaining to students

an upcoming essay assignment on the novel *Animal Farm*. As Leslie reads from the assignment

prompt, she explains that this assignment requires students to develop a thesis statement in their

essays about the character in the novel that they relate to the most. In discussing the assignment,

Leslie engages the students in brainstorming a list of major characters from the novel about

whom the students may want to write. During this speech event, three interactional frames can

be identified: (a) a parenting frame, involving students as children displaying knowledge to

teacher as parent; (b) a teamwork frame, involving the work of teacher and students as

collaborators on a project; and, (c) an underlying judicial trial frame, involving teacher as judge

evaluating opinions of students as litigants making claims.

4.1 Available Identities for Participants

The classroom activity known as brainstorming in this context represents a tightly bound

speech event with definable discourse boundaries and distinctive interactional patterns.

Although the brainstorming event frequently embeds question-and-answer and/or modeling

segments, it is identifiable by the teacher's use of the discourse markers *ok* and *so*, which signal

its boundaries, and by a pedagogically oriented interactional pattern known as the three-turn IRF

sequence, which occurs within such boundaries.

The discourse markers *ok* and *so* in particular serve to set up and monitor the boundaries of the speech event. That is, they signal to participants that a speech event is being initiated and/or is proceeding effectively. Previous to Excerpt 1, Leslie (LS) explained the essay assignment by reading from the written assignment prompt, and a student, Kent (KN), asked for clarification (see Appendix for transcription conventions).

(1)
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17   KN: Yeah.. you want us to write first on the ones you can relate to.. then on the ones
18       that are not supposed to like you.
19   LS: Right. Exactly.. Exactly. Ok..So.. for instance, if we were to say, ok well… ok,
20       let's start with brainstorming a little on the board… ok (walks to the blackboard)...
21       before I use the overhead (projector), give me some characters.
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In lines 17-18, Kent attempts to clarify that he has interpreted the essay assignment accurately. Leslie responds affirmatively in line 19. She then uses *ok* along with *so* (line 19) as discourse markers to signal the initiation of a speech event. Leslie's next three uses of *ok* (lines 19-20) confirm this signal as they are followed by her use of the suggestive *let's start with brainstorming* (line 20) and the imperative *give me some characters* (line 21), accompanied by her physical movement to the blackboard.

This shift to the brainstorming speech event now initiates an interactional pattern known as the IRF or IRE sequence (Cazden 1988/2001; Lemke 1990), typical in classroom contexts. This pattern involves a sequence, or set of embedded sequences, of teacher initiation (e.g., *Who can tell me what a noun is?*), student response (e.g., *A person, place, or thing*), and teacher feedback (e.g., *Right*), with feedback usually serving as an evaluation or correction (e.g., *Good* or *That's incorrect*). As Nassaji and Wells (2000) states, though, the IRF sequence can assume various linguistic forms and achieve a variety of different functions in the class, depending on the goals of the activity and how the follow-up move to the sequence is initiated. Excerpt 2

below demonstrates this three-turn pattern with IRF moves in bold, as participants begin to supply answers to the list on the board.

> (2)
> 26   LS: Snowball. (writes on board) Who else? **(I)**
> 27   KN: Napoleon. **(R)**
> 28   LS: (writes) **Ok (F)**, who else?. **(I)**
> 29   KN: Squealer. **(R)**
> 30   LS: **Alright (F)**, who else? **(I)** (writes)
> 31   KN: Boxer. **(R)**
> 32   LS: **Ok**. **(F)** (writes) Give me another. **(I)**

Excerpt 2 contains three complete IRF sequences. Of interest here, though, is Leslie's use of *ok* (lines 28 and 32) and *alright* (line 30) as they function in the sequences. In part, her use of *ok* and *alright* provides feedback to students that their answers are correct, further signaled by her writing them on the board. But these discourse markers also monitor discourse boundaries by directing students' attention to the speech event at hand, signaling that the event is proceeding in an expected and appropriate IRF sequence. Interactional patterns such as these provide a basis for interpreting utterances that occur in and outside of the IRF sequence.

Similar to a parent or other caregiver asking a child to recite the alphabet, this frame can be characterized as a parenting frame, one requiring students to display knowledge of major characters in the form of responses that Leslie will supply feedback on. Such a frame makes available two identities for participants: Leslie as parent knower (cf. "primary knower," Berry 1981) and the students as child displayers of knowledge. These two identities signal a social alignment in which the parent knower at times can withhold knowledge from the child displayer for pedagogical purposes. As the interaction unfolds, however, this social alignment is translated into a second teamwork frame as it is invoked when the IRF sequence is suspended. Excerpt 3 below is followed by deictic mapping in Table 1, both demonstrating the suspension of the IRF sequence (line 34) and the shift in social positioning (line 39).

(3)
    32 LS: Ok. (writes) Give me another.
    33 KN: Benton (?) [5.2]
    34 NG: He said Bluebell?
    35 LS: Bluebell?... Is she minor though?
    36 NG: Yeah {XXX}
    37 LS: {Maybe minor characters.}
    38 NG: But sh she keep Boxer in line. [4.3]
    39 LS: Yes you're right, but we're thinking in terms of... evidence. I don't know if
    40   we have enough evidence here.. in the novel… about Bluebell… I mean we can..
    41   try it, we'd have to check and see.

Table 1: Deictic Mapping of LS/KN Interaction

Line	Speaker	1st Person	2nd Person	3rd Person	Space	Time	TMA	Demonstrative
32	LS		(you)-NG				Imperative	
		Me-LS						
33	KN						*Benton* (?)	
34	NG			He-KN			Q Past	
35	LS						Q-*Bluebell?*	
				she-Bluebell			Q-Present	
36	NG						*Yeah XXX*	
37	LS						*Maybe minor*	
38	NG			sh she-Bluebell			Present	
39	LS		You-NG				Present	
		we (incl)				(now)	Prs Progressive	
		I-LS					Present	
40		we (incl)					Present	
					here-novel			
		I-LS					Present	
		we (incl)					Modal	
				it				
41		we (incl)					Modal	

Note. Social positions are in boxes, and the shift in frame is represented by the horizontal line. Also, minor clauses like "Benton(?) and "Yeah" are included in the TMA column in order to highlight the absence of explicit TMA markers and to contrast such absence with other utterances in the conversational sequence.

    As the deictic mapping in Table 1 shows, Leslie initiates another IRF sequence with the

imperative "Give me another" (line 32), signaling again with *ok* that the intended interactional

pattern is proceeding. Leslie's use of imperative, though, additionally sets up a "you-me"

alignment in social positioning, one in which the students as a group (i.e., you) are to supply the teacher (i.e., me) with characters. Since the topic of the brainstorming speech event is about a specific character named Bluebell (i.e., *she* in lines 35 and 38), pronounced something like *Benton* (line 33), social positioning involves a general "I-you-she" pattern (i.e., *I* ask *you* to supply answers about *her*) where *she* serves as the textual content that the participants are discussing.

Yet, as soon as Ning explains to Leslie that Kent said "Bluebell" (line 34), the IRF sequence is momentarily suspended. The ensuing lines in the transcript involve a negotiation (lines 35-38) between Leslie and Ning, and Leslie then initiates a clear shift in relevant frame. In line 39, what is relevant suddenly no longer involves a "you-me" alignment in social positioning but a "you-we" pattern drawn from a teamwork frame. Leslie invokes this frame to provide feedback to Ning's student-initiated response by stating that Ning (i.e., *you*) is not following the interactional pattern in which the rest of the class is presently engaged (e.g., "Yes *you're* right, but *we're* thinking in terms of…evidence" in line 39). This interpretation is further supported by Leslie's use of the present progressive element of the TMA system, which positions Ning's comments as separate from, and counter to, what the class as whole (i.e., the inclusive *we*) is presently working on. Leslie's next three uses of *we* (lines 40-41) are slightly ambiguous; that is, it is unclear whether she is continuing to use this pronoun in order to secure the "you-we-here" social alignment or to invite Ning back into the collaborative effort more inclusively. Considering Leslie's use of *ok* (line 41) followed by her questions *Ok, who else?* and *Who are some other major characters?* (line 41), the latter interpretation seems more viable as she seems to direct her questions more inclusively to all of her students.

The shift in frame is additionally characterized by the spatial marker *here* (line 40) to refer to the novel as potential "evidence" (line 40) to support Ning's interpretation. The use of the marker *here* suggests that it might be more accurate to describe the shift as one from an "I-you-she" alignment in social positioning to that of a "you-we-here" alignment (i.e., *you* are not collaboratively supplying answers in the same way as *we* are doing based on references *here* in the text). Both the parenting and the teamwork frames, as they are invoked in Excerpt 3, hearken back to Leslie's statements in Excerpt 1 where she signals the beginning of the brainstorming speech event, in part, by using both the suggestive *let's start with brainstorming a little on the board* (line 20) and the imperative *before I use the overhead, give me some characters* (line 21). The fact that both structures are used, one potentially invoking a teamwork frame and the other a parenting frame, suggests that she offers both as potentially relevant frames from the outset of the speech event.

Leslie's statement concerning textual material as evidence from the novel is an interesting one, and it provides for an understanding of a possible third frame underlying the other two. The fact that Leslie uses the term *evidence* at the point where she shifts relevant frame to position Ning counter to the collaborative effort suggests that there is another frame potentially operating. That is, what use is there for evidence within a purely collaborative teamwork frame? Furthermore, since her positioning of Ning with respect to the group seems to elicit students' collusion in judging Ning's claim about the character Bluebell, this third frame involves a type of judicial trial of learned textual material, but such a frame is not explicitly signaled through deictic patterns. In this light, Leslie's social positioning of Ning seems counter to a purely collaborative teamwork frame, as such positioning is more commensurate within a judicial trial, one in which students provide claims as litigants with Leslie as judge. This third frame is made relevant when Ning suspends the IRF sequence and contests the available

identities within the operating parenting frame, possibly perceived by Leslie as a challenge to her authority as parent knower. The underlying judicial trial frame may allow Leslie to manage this challenge to authority while continuing to monitor the IRF sequence and sustain the other two frames as operative. Seen in this way, therefore, both Ning's student-initiated claim *But sh she keep Boxer in line* (line 38) and Leslie's monitoring feedback *Yes you're right, but* (line 39) in Excerpt 3 above are infused with the underlying judicial trial frame as they redefine the ensuing interaction until Leslie shifts back to the parenting frame when the disagreement is resolved. Five more IRF sequences with three suspending segments occur in a similar manner, and they are then followed by Leslie's uninterrupted lecture about writing thesis statements. But it is when I am invoked into the discourse after this lecture segment that the underlying judicial trial frame becomes more salient.

4.2 Researcher as Witness, Text as Evidence

Upon initially entering this research site, my intention was to strategically engage in impression management by positioning myself as an innocuous observer of participant interaction—that is, what Ning once called *that guy* in the back of the room. In this class, I sat in the back of the room taking field notes, yet remained keenly aware of participants' frequent glances in my direction, their references to and about me, and my own thoughts and feelings during the process. Nevertheless, my intentions to be merely an innocuous observer were met with several challenges as participants socially positioned me in certain unexpected ways.

For example, I found that my identity as the ethnographer was negotiated by participants when suspensions of the IRF sequence continued to occur during a second brainstorming speech event. This second speech event had the participants use the characters previously listed on the board to list potential thesis statements for students' essays. The brief interaction given below involves Leslie and her student Robin (RB).

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(4)

    359 LS: You said about the structure first.
    360 RB: No, I said….
    361 LS: Mark, rewind that tape. (laughs) No.. check it... Structure of the body… No,
    362   Robin.. I think we=
    363 RB: =The structure of the body of the first paragraph.
    364 LS: The <u>structure</u>.. of the body.. of the first paragraph. You're saying three.. totally
    365   different things. And we're going to talk about why in one second. (laughter)
    366 LS: Ma::rk!.. (laughs, stomps right foot)

Previous to this excerpt, Leslie had asked the students for a thesis statement, and Robin

responded by asking if the thesis statement *should be structure a separate paragraph* (line 351)

There was some negotiation (lines 352-360) between Leslie and Robin over what he meant by

structure.

      I am then invoked into the discourse. Leslie states *Mark, rewind that tape* (line 361), and

she requests me to check the tape in order to verify whether *it* (i.e., the tape) matches *that* (i.e.,

what Robin previously said he meant). Leslie's next statement *No, Robin.. I think we* (line 362)

is ambiguous as it is truncated by Robin's repeated clarification *The structure of the body of the*

first paragraph (line 363). Considering Leslie's previous pattern of using the pronoun *we* as

inclusive of the collaborative effort against which an individual student is positioned in

exchanges such as this one, there is some indication that a similar attempt is made here as well.

But it is not until she states *You're saying three.. totally different things. And we're going to talk*

about why in one second (lines 364-365) that the "you-we" set of social positions is secured and

the shift to the teamwork frame seems to have already occurred in line 362. Several students in

the class laugh at this point, but the reason for the laughter is unclear. This is followed by Leslie

again invoking me into the discourse with *Mark!* (line 366), accompanied by her laughing,

stomping her right foot, and elongating the vowel in my name. I raise my eyebrows in response.

Interactional Entanglements

This social positioning work among participants is by no means incidental; a closer examination of deictic use reveals a characteristic pattern at work, as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Deictic Mapping LS/RB Interaction

Line	Speaker	1st Person	2nd Person	3rd Person	Space	Time	TMA	Demonstrative
359	LS		You-RB				Past	
360	RB	I-RB					Past	
361	LS		(you)-MK				Imperative	
								that tape
			(you)-MK				Imperative	
				it (that tape)				
							Structure…	
		I-LS					Present	
362		we (incl)					Present	
363	RB						*structure of..*	
364	LS						*structure of..*	
			You-RB				Prs Progressive	
365		we (incl)					Prs Progressive	
366	LS						*Ma::rk!*	

In Table 2, my invocation into the discourse signals an appeal to me as witness in the frame of a judicial trial, unlike in the previous two frames where I, as an innocuous observer, am not explicitly invoked. This patterning reveals more clearly that the dispute involves what *you* (i.e. Robin; line 359), or *I* from Robin's perspective (line 360), said and what *that tape*, or *it*, recorded (line 361). This social positioning, however, is made more complex by Leslie's invocation of me (i.e., the implied *you* in the imperative; line 361) into the discourse to set up a "you (RB)-you (Mark/that tape)-I (LS)" alignment in social positioning, one in which I occupy a position associated with the tape, between Robin and Leslie. Being invoked in such a manner, I become a witness supplying the textual evidence (i.e., the tape I am recording) to which Leslie appeals for support. Further, as the interaction continues a few lines later, Robin positions me in a similar manner.

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Excerpt 5 below shows how I am positioned by Robin, joined by Yi Liao (YL). In this excerpt, what is being contested is where my social allegiances reside—with Leslie as the teacher or with Robin and/or the other students.

(5)

    464 LS: Where.. Tell me where you studied?
    465 RB: Yeah, of course.
    466 LS: [3.9] Yeah.. tell me about it… What was the structure they sa.. they taught
    467   you? (class laughter)
    468 YL: (laughs, looks at Mark) Not true.
    469 RB: (laughs) I'm looking at Mark.
    470 LS: (looks at MK, rolls eyes) Unbelievable.

In this excerpt, Leslie asks Robin where he learned about thesis statements, and I am again drawn into the interaction for supporting textual evidence, this time by Robin. In lines 468-469, Robin and Yi Liao (YL) appeal to my knowledge of thesis statements and seek my allegiance in support of Robin's challenge to Leslie. Leslie makes an appeal to me, accompanied by a look in my direction and eye-rolling, to collude with her in the opinion that the students' behavior or the situation at hand is *unbelievable* (line 470). Leslie's appeal requires that, as witness, I supply testimony to her judgment with—at the very least—a smile, a head nod, or some other nonverbal cue signaling ratification. In response to these appeals by Leslie and her students, I smile politely and continue my field note jottings. It is unclear how my silence and smile are interpreted by Leslie and by her students. That is, the question is left open as to how and to what extent my attempt to remain a silent innocuous observer might be interpreted as participating in a particular frame. Indeed, in the remaining four IRF sequences and three suspending segments, I was twice invoked and I responded in similar fashion.

4.3 Summary of Findings

In summary, the data show that there were three sets of identities for participants in the specific social roles of "teacher" and "student(s)" within which the ethnographer as "researcher" could fit. Drawn from three frames of reference, these identities along with their respective alignments with classroom social roles included the following:

Table 3

	Teacher	Student(s)	Researcher
Teamwork	collaborator	collaborators	observer
Parenting	parent knower	child displayers	observer
Judicial trial	judge	litigants	witness

As the social alignments pattern out with respect to the classroom roles delineated above, my active position in frames is only invoked as witness. That is, I am not required to judge student responses. Nor were other identities (e.g., collaborator, parent knower, or litigant) open to me during these two brainstorming speech events. It was my association with text (i.e., the tape, my knowledge of thesis statements, and my testimony in appeals) that secured my identity as witness.

5.0 ETHNOGRAPHIC REFLECTIONS

In considering interactional patterns such as these, the analysis shows that the presence of the ethnographer did not, as it could have, lead to the participants' initiating a fourth frame that might position me in social alignments less litigious in nature. That is, my presence only exacerbated an already tense relationship between Leslie and her students. Such might only be possible if I contested the identities that were offered to me by engaging in these classroom interactions and by signaling through contextualization cues certain social positions that would help me maintain essential access to the research site, rather than remaining silent. By remaining silent, and attempting to mitigate the "Observer's Paradox", I left it to the participants to position

me within the judicial trial frame. And, considering Leslie's response to my question via email about feeling frustrated, my question must have seemed as a judgment of her teaching ability, thus potentially threatening such access. However, such a task would be difficult while engaging in entanglements like these, as I was not fully cognizant of how social positioning was mapping out in the moment-by-moment unfolding of the interactions. Now, upon reflection several years later, I am led to pose a final question: How was it that this particular set of entanglements came about? In addressing this question, a consideration of preexisting relational dynamics is useful.

One aspect of the preexisting dynamics involved the relationship between Leslie and me. Leslie and I had maintained a fairly collegial relationship over the years: we had attended the same graduate program together, we were approximately the same age (i.e., mid-thirties at the time), had taught similar courses in the same program, had attended the same work-related meetings, and were involved in the same professional organizations, even co-presenting at a professional conference. One female student, Raja, noticed one day that Leslie and I were talking after class about when I might observe again, and commented *You two go to school together?*, eliciting a wink from Joseph, another student seated nearby. These editorial comments suggested to me an additional dimension, that of gender, to which some students may have been responding. That is, my allegiances in the class might possibly at times reside with Leslie because of our assumed male/female relationship on a more personal level. This assumption may also account for why it was generally the male students (e.g., Kent, Robin, Yi Liao, Ning, and Joseph) who most frequently engaged in suspending classroom interaction and in appealing for my allegiance as compared to the two female students (i.e., Nina and Raja) who were less vocal in class. One might speculate as to whether the male students presupposed my role in the professional relationship as the male authority figure.

Another aspect of the preexisting relational dynamics involved Leslie's relationship with

other professionals within the department. In cases such as this one, departmental relationships frequently involve potential conflicts between ESL writing teachers and their colleagues teaching mainstream composition courses in the university. For example, ESL composition teachers are frequently perceived as second-class citizens in relation to their mainstream colleagues, often a self-imposed category, and this perception can be at the center of ideological tensions within the university due to differing agendas and assumptions regarding language and language use (see discussion in Benesch 1993). In Leslie's situation, as was certainly also the case with the courses I taught, there was a great deal of difficulty on her part in adapting mainstream curricular goals so as to meet the needs of these ESL learners. Leslie characterized the conflict as one between what she believed her students needed and what the program set out to achieve, thereby necessitating that she frequently adapt the curriculum for her learners. This tension often surfaced as a result of my presence as ethnographer, since Leslie would frequently comment during classroom interaction that what she was teaching was not part of the curricular goals set by the administration, and would express her concern that this might be reflected in my field notes or caught on audiotape. Her status as an ESL teacher with authority to change curricular goals was from her perspective unstable in this respect, and it is possible that students sensed this concern and at times allowed themselves to challenge her authority.

A final aspect, however, was one of my own making. Before I even entered the research site, I had set up relational dynamics through my attempts to give back to the participants for their help with my research. As stated previously, I chose to serve not only as the ethnographer in the original study but also as the writing tutor and class facilitator for group discussions, which role Leslie and I agreed upon before actual participant observation began. In my dual role as tutor/facilitator and researcher, I provided verbal feedback on student essays in private tutorial sessions outside of class meeting times and facilitated group discussions during class, as

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recompense to both Leslie and her students for my intrusion. Thus, my role in this class was not an official part of the professional relationship between Leslie and me, as she had never previously had a writing tutor or group facilitator for the class. Yet, there existed a set of competing expectations concerning who I was and what I was expected to do on the research site. As a result, I placed myself squarely within the social and political alignments of the classroom, such that I was required to negotiate the simultaneous demands of my research objectives and the demands placed on me within these preexisting relational dynamics.

I do not mean to suggest here that if these dynamics did not exist, I would not have experienced the interactional entanglements that I did. I have no basis for claiming this. Nor am I implying that these specific relational dynamics necessarily determine how an ethnographer will be accommodated into existing frames, in general. Rather, what I mean to explore is how the very personal involvement of the ethnographic enterprise can raise essential identity-related questions for the researcher in terms of his or her responsibilities to research participants (see discussion in Garcia 2000). In so doing, I recognize that a frame analysis on ethnographer/participant interactions affords me a post-mortem analysis of the entanglements discussed in this article, as well as a developing sensitivity to the deictic patterns that might occur in future ethnographic work. Since various frames remained simultaneously operative and potentially renegotiable, such an analysis productively highlights the ways in which the ethnographer is susceptible to others' social positioning through language choices. An analytical focus such as the one adopted in the present study might be conducted through field note commentary or reflective journal writing and might help other ethnographers of communication become more sensitive to similar entanglements in social positioning. Perhaps for further study, it would be revealing to explore these participants' roles and frame shifts in terms of IRF sequences. That is, how do IRF sequences affect these participants' roles and frame shift?

Interactional Entanglements

For ethnographers who otherwise might not be as linguistically inclined in their research, such a detailed line-by-line analysis of transcripts may not be desirable or time-effective. However, general ethnographic reflection on social positioning during their research encounters might facilitate the "critical subjectivity" (Lincoln & Guba 2000: 183) necessary for impression management in and through discourse. In fact, when ethnographic research is conducted in an educational setting—where learning often hinges upon the delicate ecology of teacher/student interaction—such an analysis may be an essential starting point for engaging in the renegotiation of identities on the research site, or even an integral part of the very personal ethnographic enterprise.

Appendix: Transcription Conventions

. , ?!	used as grammatical markers with unmarked intonation	Who else?
<u>underline</u>	stressed word or syllable	The <u>structure</u> of the body
.. …	shorter pauses under 3.0 seconds	Yeah.. you want us to write
….	Uncompleted utterance and pause	No, I said….
[4.3]	pause > 3.0 seconds	she keep Boxer in line. [4.3]
=	latched speech	LS: I think we= RB: =The structure
( )	transcriber comment	(writes on board)
{ }	overlapping speech	NG: Yeah {XXX} LS: {Maybe minor characters.}
::	elongated vowel	Ma::rk
XXX	inaudible speech	Yeah XXX
?	approximate transcription	Benton (?)

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