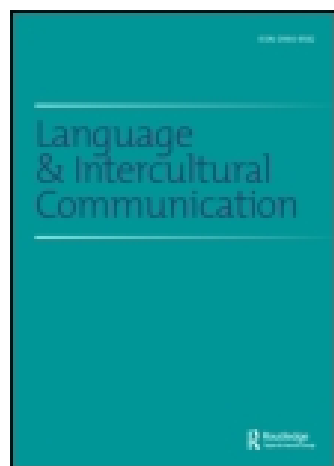


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Publisher: Routledge

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Language and Intercultural Communication

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmli20>

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Published online: 18 May 2011.

To cite this article: Catherine Wallace (2011) A school of immigrants: how new arrivals become pupils in a multilingual London school, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 11:2, 97-112, DOI: [10.1080/14708477.2011.556742](https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2011.556742)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2011.556742>

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A school of immigrants: how new arrivals become pupils in a multilingual London school

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The social space this paper is concerned with is a particular school: it is local in that it ostensibly serves a local community in West London; however, it is global in that the student body is formed from families with connections all over the world. During an intensive period of 3 weeks, I observed a group of 12-year-olds in three classes: Maths, Humanities and English, two of which, Maths and English are exemplified here. All the children had arrived in the UK within the last 2 years. Through classroom observation and interviews with selected children and teachers, I document particular tensions, resistances and achievements that are part of the young people's growing sense of membership of the school and their wider role as new citizens of the UK.

Goob bulsheedka uu qoraalkani ku salaysanyhay waa dugsi gaar ah: waa dugsi deegaan oo si muuqda ugu adeega bulshada Galbeedka Landhan; hase ahaatee, waa dugsi caalami ah oo ardada dhigata ay ka dhasheen qoysas ka yimmaadda meelo kala duwan oo dunida ah. Mudo hawl-qabad deg-deg ah oo socday saddex toddobaad, waxa aan isha-kala-socdey 12 arday oo dhiganayey saddex maadoo: Xisaab, Taariikh iyo Ingiriisi, oo laba ka mid ah, Xisaabta iyo Ingiriisi, halkan tusaale lagaga baxshey. Dhammaan ardadydu waxa ay dalkan yimaadeen labadii sanno ee u dambeeyey. Kormeerka fasalada iyo waraysi aan la yeeshay arada iyo barayaashaba, waxa aan arkay iska-hor-immad, diidmo iyo harumar oo run ahaan ah qayb ka mid dareenka koraya ee xubin-ka-noqodka dugsiga iyo doorka ballaadhan ee wadani cusub ee dalkan Isu-tagga Boqortooyada.

Keywords: schooling; immigrants; literacy; curriculum regimes; citizenship; classroom interaction

Introduction and background to the study

The secondary school at the centre of this study, which I call Roseland College, was described by a former teacher at the school, herself of a minority ethnic background, as a 'school of immigrants'. The teacher probably alluded to Roseland's exceptionally high number of new arrivals including an above average number of refugees and asylum seekers who join the college at different times during the academic year. The school, situated in West London, has been largely abandoned by the mainly white families in its immediate environs, as new arrivals from all corners of the globe take their place, almost literally 'off the plane' in some cases, as Heathrow Airport is nearby. Of the current students, 87% come from minority ethnic groups and over 73% do not speak English as their first language. At Roseland College teachers as

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well as students come from diverse linguistic, social class and cultural backgrounds. A recent Ofsted¹ report notes that ‘the adults working in (Roseland) college reflect the college population and act as good role models for students’. Often they are not speakers of Standard English. The teachers who formed part of my present study included one British Standard English speaker, one non-standard London speaker, whose use of English featured widespread London usage such as ‘she done it’, and one Polish teacher who, while fluent in English, had some non-native features in her speech, such as omission of copula, as in ‘Alex what my key information?’.

In this paper I shall first set out some theoretical considerations linked to ways of characterising this social setting, before offering an analysis at the micro level of ways in which these principles are realised in classroom discourse. My aim is to explore some of the ways in which a selected group of recent arrivals to the school draw on their cultural, educational and linguistic resources to become pupils in the new setting. Willes (1983) describes how young children are socialised into schooling as a process of ‘becoming a pupil’, learning the demeanours and practices that will qualify them to become acceptable members of school society and, ultimately, acceptable citizens. The learners in this study are much older but in a sense are ‘starting over’ in a new school and a new schooling system, as well as becoming new members of the wider society.

I wished to investigate how the experiences and identities of this group of learners are enacted in the school as a whole and in the context of key curriculum areas. In the research on which this paper draws I observed a group of 12-year-olds all of whom have arrived in the UK in the last 2 years, in three classes over an intensive period of 3 weeks. These classes were Maths, Humanities and English. In the lessons described here I focus on the teaching of Maths, Drama and Phonics (Drama and Phonics constitute part of subject English).

I document particular tensions and resistances as well as moments of achievement that are part of the young people’s growing sense of membership of the school but also the wider society that legitimates the values and practices of schooling. I note the ambivalence suggested by their demeanour and words as they express both the wish to belong, to become ‘pupils’, at the same time as asserting other identities and values as they respond to the school’s curriculum regimes. More fine-tuned scrutiny of key sections of classroom discourse shows how these young people navigate the rules of the new social setting. While compliance is the rule, there are also moments of resistance. The rarity of these moments, supported by comments from the children themselves, suggests that these are rational and motivated responses rather than the unfocused and generalised, low level oppositional behaviour of the kind documented by Willis (1977). More recent work on working-class pupils, both White working-class children (Maybin, 2006) and working-class multilingual groups of London school children (see Rampton, 2006), records how pupils, while not actively disruptive in class, will frequently move into playful mode as they perform classroom tasks. In contrast, most of the discourse of the learners and teachers in this study is strongly aspirational and learners remain task focused to a high degree, even when not scrutinised by teachers. All of the learners I spoke to, even if they planned eventually to return to their countries of origin, aspired to a university level education in the UK.

Mobility: the local and the global

At first sight these young people are highly mobile. It is common for them to have lived and had schooling in several countries and in different schools within these

before they arrive at Roseland. As Mohan, a 12-year-old, originally from Afghanistan says:

M: First I go in er Paris, and we go in and we go in the South of France and we go in Tours.

C: Two schools?

M: No many schools

However, though these children have crossed continents, this is not from choice. They do not occupy the global spaces of the more privileged whose cultural capital spans location (see Jackson 2011; Zhu et al. 2011). Movement is involuntary, even desperate, as families escape persecution and pursue better job opportunities. These are frequently illusory and many of the children's parents remain out of work, even when they were highly qualified in their countries of origin, as was Mohan's father who worked as an engineer in Afghanistan.

Nor, once in a new environment, are the children part of local communities. Some move to areas where others of the same ethnic and language group have settled but there is constant flux as initial accommodation is temporary. This affects schools in the area, as children come and go. Mobility is thus forced upon many of these families once in the new country, making it difficult for them to take their bearings either from their place of origin or from an eventual new home.

In short, a conventional polarity of the global and the local fails to capture the experience of these young people. With the ethnographic turn in educational and literacy studies, the local and the contingent has been privileged, especially under the auspices of the 'New Literacy Studies' (see, for instance, Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Prinsloo & Baynham, 2008; Street, 1984). Literacy has been seen as socially situated and culturally specific by these literacy ethnographers who challenge universalistic notions of literacy – famously named by Street as 'autonomous' literacy. Local sites are favoured as spaces where learners' learning identities can be best nurtured, offering self-determination, greater authenticity, loss of interference from the 'centre' and the release from state regimes of testing.

The New Literacy Studies has been criticised for focusing over-much on the local (Brandt & Clinton, 2002) and for failing to index local ethnographic accounts against broader, globalised political economies of literacy, information and image' (Luke, 2004, p. 331). Certainly there are problems with the celebration of the local and vernacular in the case of the learners in my study. Apart from the wider ideological issues raised by Luke, there is a more immediate one: what and where is local for new arrivals in UK schooling? For the children in Roseland, involuntary mobility has meant attendance at a number of schools either within the UK or across countries. Many of the young people have experienced two-step migration, spending time, including schooling, in countries such as France, Sweden or Germany before they settle in London.

Becoming citizens

Because the journey to Roseland has been circuitous, the children have complex identities and allegiances to the original home country, other countries where they will have spent varying amounts of time and the UK. Some are already British citizens, some aspire to be and several plan to return, along with their families, to

their country of origin once their education is completed. While not all pupils are or expect to become British citizens, notions of citizenship, explicit or veiled, underpin much of the curriculum discourse and school practices in Roseland and teachers praise pupils for 'being good citizens'. With citizenship now a curriculum requirement in the UK, this is not surprising. However, what being a citizen means is open to different interpretations in school and beyond. Osler (2005, p. 4) offers one definition: 'citizenship is essentially about belonging, about feeling secure and being in a position to exercise one's rights and responsibilities'.

It is the tension between rights and responsibilities – to the group or wider society – which is played out in school society. Contemporary discourse in educational settings and more widely would appear to privilege rights over responsibilities: the citizen as consumer rather than as public servant. Individual rights prevail over the notion of citizenship as the furthering of policy and practices that enhance the public good. As Harris (2007, p. 42) puts it, '[t]he new language is not of the citizen as a social being but as an individual where freedom and autonomy are central'. However, while the prevailing discourse may indeed lean towards an individualistic interpretation of citizenship, the circumstances of particular schools may tip the balance towards an ethos and accompanying discourse that favours responsibility over rights and collectivism over individualism. The parents of Roseland students have not, for instance, been in a position to exercise choice of school for their children, in what has come to be seen as the right of parents as consumers. At the same time, schools like Roseland, in a constant state of flux as regards both their student and teacher population, are in a position to create a unique school culture where mainstream values may be reconfigured.

In his study of the cultures of primary schooling in five countries, Robin Alexander (2000) addresses the ideological differences society-wide that penetrate particular schools and classrooms. He notes that the values that shape teaching are underpinned by a view about how people should behave towards each other. While Alexander describes primary schooling, notions of acceptable and agreed ways of doing things are also strongly evident in Roseland. Behaviour is strongly policed, especially within the classroom, to the extent that pupils are reprimanded for an aside or gesture that may elude less eagle-eyed observers.

Although Alexander (2003) claims that British schools veer towards an individualist ethos, what emerges in the Roseland classes that I observed is a collectivist principle tinged with a strong 'community' ethos that Alexander describes as one which 'centres on human interdependence, caring for others, sharing and collaborating' (2003, p. 29). For Alexander, collectivism is characterised by human interdependence, as with a community orientation, but with a wider brief to serve the needs of state or society. While there is little talk of society as such, Roseland teachers make appeals to ideas of the common good that extend beyond the group and its constituent membership. Such appeals are embedded not only in discourse but in practice, as learners act out the role of 'good pupil' and, by extension, 'good citizen'.

The study

The overall question addressed by the paper is: how do new arrivals to a school experiencing high levels of diversity and mobility become pupils in the new setting?

On the grounds that ‘becoming a pupil’ involves acquiring not just language and curriculum knowledge, but the demeanours and practices linked to being ‘a good citizen’, two more specific questions are:

- (1) In what ways do different curriculum areas allow pupils who are new to English and new arrivals in a multilingual London school to develop their language, learner identities and subject specific knowledge?
- (2) What view of citizenship emerges in the classroom discourse and practices of the learners and teachers?

I find answers to these questions in research carried out over a period of 3 weeks in 2008, during which time I observed 45 lessons. This was against the background of eight earlier visits to the school in a range of roles as teacher trainer, researcher and provider of school-wide professional in-service training. During the 3 weeks, I became, effectively, an honorary member of class 8a as I sat in on each day’s English, Maths and Humanities classes. I acted as a participant observer who was frequently enlisted to take part in the class proceedings, usually working with individual children or groups. I used field notes for the first 2 weeks and selective audio recordings for a further week. For the purpose of this paper, I focus more specifically on three learners who feature in the selected episodes and the related commentary. These are Zara and her cousin Mina from Somalia and Mohan from Afghanistan. (NB All the names of the pupils and the teachers have been anonymised.)

Zara, Mina and Mohan are part of a class whose countries of origin include Poland, Slovakia, Portugal, Brazil, Somalia, Djibouti, Afghanistan, India and Nepal. There are nine boys and five girls in the class, all with some literacy either in English and/or another language. The exception is Jamila from Djibouti, who has had no previous schooling. Ms M is a Teaching Assistant and acts as the class teacher on a model that is more typical of primary than of secondary schooling in the UK, Ms P is the English and Drama teacher and Ms B is the Maths teacher.

Curriculum regimes

What was striking during my observations was the highly visible pedagogy of Ms P and Ms B’s classes where lesson aims, expected behaviour and demeanour were made explicit. In Bernstein’s (1996) terms, classification and framing was strong. The knowledge base was also explicitly articulated, with statements indicating what it means to ‘do mathematics’ and to ‘do drama’. This brings to mind the work of Young (2008) who challenges the social constructionist views of the past 30 or more years, which have been reluctant to acknowledge anything like objective forms of knowledge. However, if we accept Young’s call to ‘bring knowledge back in’, a position I would broadly support, then we need to ask what is the nature of this knowledge? What is it that we want young people to know in the twenty-first century? What issues might arise in contexts of high diversity where questions of what constitutes everyday as opposed to school knowledge might be differently inflected? Attempts to answer these questions link not just to curriculum knowledge but to curriculum regimes.

I use the term ‘curriculum regime’ to describe not merely the curriculum content (in recent years much more prescribed and explicit than hitherto in the wake of the UK National Curriculum), but also how it is acted out pedagogically to include the

discourses in which the curriculum content is embedded. Yandell (2008) describes how 'subject English' is interpreted and in my study English was interpreted by the English and Drama teacher in very particular ways, as we shall see. Blommaert, Creve, and Willaert (2006) describe the way in which immigrants into Belgium are expected to 'do literacy' in specific and circumscribed ways, leading to disqualification of learners' existing linguistic and literacy resources. They draw on the notion of 'literacy regimes' to describe the ideological underpinning of literacy instruction that valorises favoured and familiar literacy practices, while dismissing or simply not noticing other kinds of literacy acts or knowledge that new arrivals bring to learning in the new society. The term *ideological* is key, whether one talks of literacy or, more broadly, of 'curriculum' regimes, because both the selected content and the way it is framed by teachers make assumptions about student needs, abilities and resources closely linked to power relations in the wider society.

In research done in the USA, it has been noted that so-called disadvantaged students, regardless of the basis of their actual or presumed disadvantage, are more likely to be subjected to mechanical forms of instruction, which may 'eliminate lived experiences and funds of knowledge from the learning and teaching process' (Moll, 2002, p. 266). A preoccupation with the teaching of decontextualised skills rather than with knowledge and understanding of principles leads frequently to mechanistic instruction. In particular, those perceived as needing special assistance with language and literacy are confined to form focused instruction of a cognitively unchallenging nature.

Included in such 'disadvantaged' groups are second language learners. This is in spite of the fact that many pupils – most of the children in the present study in fact – have prior educational experience and may have strong literacy skills in their first language. As noted earlier, the work of Blommaert et al. (2006) testifies to this tendency to ignore the previous educational experience of new arrivals who do not speak the language of the school. In the Belgian immersion classes that Blommaert and his colleagues observed, the immigrant children were declared to be 'language less' and 'illiterate'.

In the second part of this paper I make selective use of the tools of systemic functional analysis (see Halliday, 1994) to carry out an analysis of the classroom discourse, with reference to three learning episodes. Halliday characterises the context of situation, as any occurrence of language use, in this case lessons taking place in classrooms. The context comprises three features: what is being talked about or what is going on, the relationship between the speakers and the way the event is organised. These three parameters are known as *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. Most of the time *mode* is fairly constrained in classrooms, so I shall here focus on the variables of field and tenor to analyse the classroom discourse. Halliday's notion of field allows consideration of the content, in other words, the knowledge base or what is being taught and learned both explicitly and incidentally, what is called *ideational* meaning. Meanwhile, tenor allows consideration of the nature of role relationships in the classrooms, that is *interpersonal* meaning.

The maths class: 'Miss I done it the other way'

The teacher is Ms B. She is Polish and, on her own admission, she did not speak English fluently when she came to the school 3 years earlier. She has an engineering degree and at the time of the research was gaining qualified teacher status in the UK. The bottom

Maths set of year 8 is coterminous with Class 8a – all, as we have seen, new arrivals. The exception is Mohan, who has just been moved to the top group of the year and the one boy who is a native speaker, Bryn, who comes from another class.

Extract 1

(NB: Transcription conventions for all three extracts can be found in Appendix 1.)

- (1) Ms B: OK Class this lesson is a kind of revision so I hope you remember. This is our starter. Question number one... question number three. I hope you remember this. Definitely this week we are going to repeat the test. What's the date today?
- (2) P: March...
- (3) Ms B: March 2008
- (4) Zara: Miss you know the title. Is it always – does it always has to be capital letters?
- (5) Ms B: Yes because if you start a sentence. The sentence...
- (6) Z: But this isn't a sentence. It's just a *word*.
- (7) Ms B: It's a title – always with a capital letter. So if you want – Marek. Capital M. Some people using small letters but Standard English is saying your name should start with a capital. Capital letters and your surname. Your name should start...
- (8) P: Is it sort of revision?
- (9) Ms B: Um kind of yes. We are always revising in different ways.
- (10) Ms B: OK Class. As a starter we are going to do 10 quick questions. Today is about rounding. Rounding to the whole number. Let's start. Write down the number. Today I'm going to give you 10 seconds. So we are rounding to the whole number. Rounding to the whole number.

Extract 2

- (1) Ms B: Now this is a question for Prianka. If I have two pounds how am I going to write it as a number?
- (2) Pr: 2
- (3) Ms B: Now, question: I've got 20 pence. How am I going to write this as a number? Sylvia
- (4) Sylvia: T – W – O.
- (5) Bryn: Two point zero
- (6) Ms B: Zero point two. Now this is a question for Marek: if I've got...
- (7) M: Zero point zero nine
- (8) Ms B: Read for yourself question no 3. Do not give me the answer. Only underline the key words – to be able to solve this problem Question 3.
- (9) P: Miss I done it
- (10) Ms B: Only underline the key words. Key words only to be able to solve the problem. You are not helping Jamila (addressed to Sylvia). She's doing this on her own. Its not your job.
- (11) Ms B: Class who is going to read the question for me? No Fawad no Prianka (she selects Prianka).
- (12) (Prianka reads the question aloud in a very quiet voice.)
- (13) Ms B: OK. So now tell me the key information. Alex, what my key information which I ask you to underline?
- (14) A: Seven pencils
- (15) Sylvia: Each pencil... *Each*
- (16) P: Each, each, each
- (17) Ms B: How much each?
- (18) P: 9p
- (19) Ms B: Who can solve this problem for me? What I have to do?
- (20) P: Seven times nine – 63
- (21) Mina: Miss I done it the other way

- (22) Ms B: What way?
 (23) M: I change nine to zero point zero nine and then times it to seven and then I got 0.63
 (24) Ms B: Well done Mina (several pupils clap) because in this example you have to remember to write the *p* because if you forget, 63 is what?
 (25) P: 63 pounds
 (26) P: or a number
 (27) Ms B: If you don't they will assume you mean pounds. You have to give the answer to your own problem.
 (28) Ms B: Mina one more time, can you repeat this?

(The class then work together on the problem, following Mina's way of formulating it.)

Extract 3: End of class

- (1) Ms B: So please close your books now. So well done for today. You did much better than yesterday. I think this is because of the weather. So now very quickly class. Think for one second, what did you learn today? I'm giving every one 15 seconds to think.
 (2) P: I learn properly how to divide things and the rounding.
 (3) P: Solving problems
 (4) Ms B: Class we all listen to each other. This is the way we respect each other.
 (5) P: I learned how to read.
 (6) Marek: When we done the starter I learned more about rounding.
 (7) Ms B: Now the lesson is finished.
 (8) P: Miss, what did *you* learn?

Comment

In terms of field, there is a transparent knowledge base here and overall, this is a highly visible pedagogy. Aims are made explicit at each stage of the lesson, with words such as 'this is about rounding; this is revision'. There is a considerable amount of meta-commentary, by which Ms B says what the lesson is, what is going to happen and what she is doing. Reasons for each course of action are provided, as in 'you only need to underline the key words in the text, because this will allow you to solve the problem'. While there is a clear focus on a particular outcome, incidental questions are answered seriously and substantively. A common response of teachers to questions such as Zara's query about the use of capitals in line 4 is to deny relevance. This is not Ms B's practice and all questions are taken seriously.

At first sight the tenor appears to follow the pattern of the predictable initiation, response, evaluation or IRE sequence, seen by Cazden (2001), along with many other educators, as the default pattern of turn exchanges in classrooms. On closer investigation, however, Ms B tends to withhold feedback or evaluation. Absent are the 'goods' or other phatic kinds of praise, which form the final part of the triadic turn in much classroom discourse in the UK. Reformulation is also limited. Ms B appears to adhere to a collective principle more prominent, claims Alexander, in French and Russian pedagogy, a tendency he extends into central Europe (2003, p. 30). In one Russian classroom that he observed, Alexander notes: 'the teacher is more likely to nominate directly the children from whom she wishes to hear, and to construct her questions with them in mind' (2008, p. 31). This behaviour is mirrored strikingly in lines 6 and 11 by this Polish teacher, albeit with rather older pupils than those observed by Alexander. There is a brisk two-part initiation-response exchange. However this does not detract from a dialogic quality: learners initiate, their

responses are taken seriously and the responses cumulatively lead to a resolution. Moreover, while the teacher takes control of turn taking, nominating turns and discouraging learners from helping each other, she does not disallow uninvited turns. Finally, praise, where it occurs, is reserved either for the whole class or for what she sees as an exceptional contribution, as in the instance of Mina's claim to have 'done it a different way'. Mina not only takes the floor uninvited but is confident enough to put forward a different approach to the problem set. Her contribution triggers spontaneous applause from her classmates.

The phonics class: 'h h h humble That's a very advanced word'

All of class 8a are present here along with Ms P the English teacher and Ms M who is the class teacher. It should be noted that all the class have basic reading skill in both their own language and English, apart from Jamila, who is new to schooling.

Ms M: Get to your English seats please... OK Are we ready? You can take your blazer off. Jamila you need to tuck this in please (shirt into her blazer). Zara I need to see you at the end of this lesson about the absent note. OK?... Ask him to explain what we done in English yesterday (Zara was absent the day before)

(Sound of 'h' reverberates round the class)

Ms M: There's someone that sounds like they're a panting dog. That's definitely not what we learned yesterday.

Pupils: **hot, horse hello**

(Ms P. The English and Drama teacher arrives)

- (1) Ms P: H – h - hello. S s s o s s o rry I am late. G g g good moaning. Good morning class. Class we' ve got a few changes next week... Monday we have *Success maker*... Let's make progress now. (to Ms M.) Miss we haven't seen the words for ha ha ha so let's go into /h/. OK so let's actually try saying **hat**
- (2) Class: **hat**
- (3) Ms P: nice **horse**
- (4) Class: **horse**
- (5) Ms P: No we haven't done all the phonemes there. e e e **head**
- (6) Class: **head**
- (7) Ms P: We've done all of those.
- (8) Ms P: **hats**
- (9) Class: **hats**
- (10) Ms P: **horse**
- (11) Class: **head hats horse hen** (Prompts are displayed on the computer screen showing the READ/WRITE INC phonics scheme which the children respond to)
- (12) Class: **hen horse**
- (13) Ms P: We will recap to go back to yesterday's lesson. I might ask some of you to volunteer a /h/ word, to say it loudly and clearly so Marek (Marek missed yesterday's class) can hear the words beginning with /h/. You might be able to think of a /h/. So all together class h h h **horse**
- (14) Class: **horse**
- (15) Ms P: Anybody want to volunteer their own /h/ word?
- (16) Ms M: Zara missed the class too
- (17) Ms P: Oh ... Zara ... Beg your pardon Zara: Ha Ha Ha
- (18) Z: Ha ha ha

- (19) Ms P: So let's get rid of the /æ/
- (20) Zara... (*Zara repeats horse, hats, hen*)
- (21) Ms P: We're now going to hear the class's /h/ /h/ /h/ words.
- (22) Pupil: h h h **historical** (class all repeat this word)
- (23) Fawad: h h h **hexagon**
- (24) Ms P: mmm **hexagon**
- (25) Class: **hexagon**
- (26) Ms P: ... Any other good words to volunteer?
- (27) Pupil: h h h **Harry Potter. Harry Potter**
- (28) Ms P: Just Zara now **Harry Potter**
- (29) Z: **Harry Potter**
- (30) Ms P: Very clear on the /t/s Prianka
- (31) Pr: h h h **humble**
- (32) Ms P: h h h **humble** That's a very advanced word. That means someone who is shy and modest and who does not show off so nice quality to have. Sometimes humble also means poor.
- (33) Pupil: **Handsome**
- (34) Ms P: Are the boys in the class handsome? Yes they are Ms M. you've got a good looking class. Hate to say it class if you had been ugly I would not be teaching you. You are trying to r r r rival Fawad in big words ...
- (35) Ms P: With your partner take it in turns **Harry Hurry** take it in turns and go round the class with your partner
- (36) Class: **harry hurry harry hurry harry hurry**
- (37) Ms P: It might help for you to write it down – some of you are slipping to 'horries' and 'hairies' and goodness knows what else

Comment

In terms of the field of discourse, there are none of the artefacts usually linked to literacy or subject English. The mediating tools in the lesson are the two teachers, the phonics material software, the computer and a phonics chart on an otherwise bare wall. The field of knowledge is highly visible, displayed as it is on the screen and as a further visual crib. The material is a commercial phonics package, presumed to serve as a non-negotiable set of facts about language and presented as such. Based on synthetic phonics, the literacy package is universalist in its assumptions, representing a strong version of Street's autonomous literacy. No mention is made of varieties of English other than Standard English, apart from one concession to language variation: the use of the Northern English /ʊ/, hardly relevant for London-based learners. There is no acknowledgement of variability of pronunciation attributable to non-native speaker accents. Indeed the aim of the class is to achieve the closest possible convergence to Received Pronunciation, an elusive, near impossible goal, if only because RP is an idealisation. The body of knowledge is fixed and determined: Zara and Marek had missed the sounds presented in the previous day's lesson, so these had to be rehearsed. This fits the scientism of phonics methods, although the teaching material has been prepared not by a phonetician but by an educator with no formal linguistics training (Miskin, 2009).

While objections might be mounted to the material on the basis of the strong view of literacy as autonomous and context independent, a more powerful objection in my view is that the material is in fact seen *not* as universally applicable but as *particularly* suitable for the wide range of students for whom difference shades into

deficit. In short, the children here, ‘different’ because second language learners, are perceived to have a particular need for the strictly regimented phonics regimes.

The tenor of discourse is formal; there are two teachers with different kinds of authority, Ms M acting as the teaching assistant who operates the computer mediated phonics package, following Ms P’s instructions. Turns are distributed only by Ms P and pupils invariably respond. Doing it right is emphasised, as with the use of fingers to blend sounds, known as ‘freddy fingers’ where the correct hand movement is crucial. This recalls the great emphasis on acquiring formal writing skills which Blommaert et al. (2006) describe in their study of new arrivals in a Belgian school. Ms P wishes to emphasise ways of speaking, such as clarity and confidence. She also wishes to extend the stress on neatness and carefulness to the writing that is done in class, when the graphemes are produced to correspond to the phonemes. It is a discourse of strong control and recalls Makoe’s study of subject English in South African classrooms (see Makoe, 2009), where a typical admonishment was to ‘correct your English and tuck in your shirt’, said by the teacher to a South African 9-year-old. What is at stake here is not just English, but the right *kind* of English. It is an English linked to demeanour and smartness, as the following excerpt shows:

Ms P: So class, our target now is to have your page straight, the right length of pen or biro and learning how to hold. So Miss and Dr Wallace keep your eyes peeled.

Interest lies not in the highly predictable features of tenor and field but how these are hijacked and reshaped by the pupils. This is evident in uninvited contributions as in turn 30 where Prianka offers the word ‘humble’. As Yandell puts it, with reference to his groups of pupils of English, ‘students make new meanings from the resources at their disposal’ (2008, p. 54). The pupils are aiming to bring more meaning to a mechanical task, to personalise it through vying to find ‘interesting’ words; Ms P responds to this effort with praise and humour: ‘Are the boys in the class handsome?’ and ‘Miss (to Ms M) You’ve got a good looking class’.

In short, while the phonics instruction bears witness to the kind of mechanistic teaching which has been noted to characterise that offered to disadvantaged pupils (Collins & Blot, 2003; Moll, 2002), the young people, and indeed Ms B, manage the programme by going beyond the highly prescribed regime. At one point in the lesson, I wrote the following words in my field notes:

B deals with the obvious crassness of the subject matter by dramatising what the kids are doing to very good effect. She gets them to bring their voices down while keeping the same level of clarity and over-enunciation. This performance takes on a life of its own and the children clearly enjoy it. She says: ‘Even though you’re talking quietly ... you can say the word clearly and carefully. Your speaking skills will have improved’.

To my initial surprise, the pupils enjoy both the clarity and the dramatising of the phonics class. The exception is Mohan, who is frequently singled out for attention. ‘Let’s have a strong /b/ not a droopy one’, Ms P says of Mohan’s rather limp attempt. While Mohan is identified as the ‘clever boy’ at Maths, he is wayward when it comes to phonics. He is seen as recalcitrant, an awkward individualist, as indicated in one comment made by Ms M to Ms P: ‘Miss I have noticed that the two who do what they want are Mohan and Kulvinder – they will insist on doing it their way’. My field notes have a number of comments along these same lines:

Bodies are used: the straight back, fingers, hands, fingers to make shapes of words and voice quality, loudness, hardness. All the kids are riveted, smiling, apart from Mohan who looks bored.

In fact, Mohan indicates through a number of small resistances and comments, often caught as asides, that he thinks that all of this activity is childish. In an interview with him, when I asked him about his English lessons, he said: ‘p–a–t’ jokingly. In very limited English, and supported at times by his French teacher, Mohan makes clear his disdain for aspects of the instruction that he receives:

M: In France we learn too much we need to learn er er..er. . . not one word we need to learn **all** the sentence and here we don’t need.

The drama class: ‘we’ve got the whole class now’

All of class 8a are present along with Ms P and Ms M.

- (1) Ms P: . . . Try and make a circle. Prianka get into the circle and don’t be silly. By Jamila. Fawad close the circle, take a step in, shoulder to shoulder. And really close up. Now please. No silly comments. Some of the girls might be embarrassed. Some of the boys might be embarrassed. This is drama. It’s got to be really close; it’s got to be so close I can’t see daylight. I do this with all my students. Drop your arms, drop your arms, drop your arms. Please move in. Listen you need to close gaps. Close gaps. There’s a huge gap. Move in. Take a step inside the circle, drop your hands. Jamila step in that’s it. Fawad drop arms, drop arms, drop arms. Now we have really got to be . . . try to squeeze in Marek no no please no, straight as anything. Now right inner hand on first shoulder. . . now on the count of three we want to sink down. You will end up sitting on each other’s knee. My best groups can keep this up for a whole minute. So deep breath OK are you ready? One two three start sinking down. Knees out sitting down. Zara please Zara please Zara.

(Zara leaves the group and stands aside.)

- (2) Ms P: One, two no gap three sink down. Sylvia . . . try not to be embarrassed. Michel up up up. It’s because you’re twisting. It’s because you’ve got to be absolutely straight. Its team work like when you build a machine or design something; one thing fits into another. Look class that is what you are doing and use your inner hand to balance yourself. Its balance or trust . . .
- (3) Ms P: Zara, you’ve got another chance to get in without being silly because Miss is going to take a photograph.
- (4) Pupil: Come in man.
- (5) Ms P: You want an extension? At the end of the day you’ll get an extension. Refuse to do drama is really bad. Get into position. It can be done. Ready? One two three. Start sinking down. Your knees go out.
- (6) Ms P: One two three down Mina. Much better. Mina swap positions because you’re not even trying. All the other girls are being very brave and the boys are being brave. You are not being asked to do anything unacceptable or rude. Adults do it, babies do it; if the Queen had a chance she’d want to do it (laughter) though with her outfit I don’t think the Queen would be able to do it. . . . Mina swap places with someone. . . Well done the rest of you for being. . . (Ms P turns to refer to Zara at this point).
- (7) Ms P: She is really being very undrama. At least you’re trying Mina unlike Zara. Literally Zara you are not supporting your class. *You* (to the rest of the class) are

now supporting each other. Zara you're refusing to support the class. It's a very bad message.

(8) Ms M: I'll take some pictures.

(9) Ms P: One, two three down knees out. Down Fawad... there's a huge gap there. 10 seconds 20 hold it... hold it.

(Screeches of delight by the pupils at 'holding it'.)

(Zara joins the group.)

(10) Ms P: Come in Zara in you go. Thank you Zara. Excellent. Find a place to slot yourself in. We've got the whole class now. Positions. Drop hands. That's it. Paulo in a bit Mohan in a bit. Kulvinder turn in a bit. OK here we go. One, two three sink.

After the lesson I chat to Mina as we leave together:

(11) C: Did you enjoy that or did you find it embarrassing?

(12) Mina: I enjoy it but it was embarrassing. We are not allowed to do that.

(13) C: You're not allowed to do that?

(14) M: Our religion. But with girls that's alright but not with boys.

(15) C: Zara did it in the end.

(16) M: She did because there were (indistinct)...

Comment

The episode needs to be seen in the context of other lessons with Ms P, which include the phonics classes. Drama is seen as the highlight, the treat of the week. On a Friday it replaces the phonics lesson, which represents subject English on every other day of the week. The success with which Ms P is able to hold the floor entirely with no verbal interruption from students is in striking contrast to the lessons observed in a London school by Rampton (2006). As Ms M notes, even the bad boy of the class, Marek, 'adores Ms P'. It may be that this gives Ms P licence to pursue the high risk strategy she does, one in which her own loss of face is at stake in the event of continued non-compliance from Zara. Ms P is well aware of religious practices and sensitivities, which, in the case of Muslims, would prohibit physical contact between boys and girls. However, overriding religious and gender identity is a curriculum requirement to 'do drama', an overarching collectivist ethos which denies space for the assertion of individual rights.

With regard to the field of discourse, Ms P is unequivocal about what is going on and what is required to fulfil the demands of the curriculum. 'This is drama', she says. Drama is not to be seen as 'having fun', a respite from the rigours of phonics, but is configured here as involving precision, discipline and an aesthetic sense, invoking a collectivity. Literally the individual is less important than the group, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. But every part is crucial and indeed this is linked to another curriculum area – design and technology. As Ms P explains: 'It's team work like when you build a machine or design something; one thing fits into another'. Here bodies become tools, as with the way phonics is done, with the use of hands and mouths.

If we consider the tenor of discourse, Ms P acts as a conductor of a performance. Her words are the trigger to this performance, achieved entirely by the use of the

young people's bodies. The physical requirements are not open to negotiation – there is no alternative interpretation of 'doing drama'. The manner in which Ms P places herself in relationship to the pupils is highly authoritarian; at the same time she uses her own body, as does Ms M, to demonstrate and at times to take part in the prescribed drama movement. It is a discourse of solidarity – the 'we' over the 'I', as in: 'all boys and girls work well together doing the sort of work we do'. The use of humour is evident too and much enjoyed by the class, as when Ms P says '*even the Queen does it*', although it is not quite clear what 'it' refers to. Apart from Zara, only Mina shows some resistance to the requirement of close physical contact with fellow students; Jamila, the third Muslim girl in the group, also wearing the hijab, joins in with enthusiasm.

The critical moment is provided by Zara who offers physical resistance before eventual compliance. The act of defiance is to remove herself physically from the group and to stand to one side. Her silence is striking. Resistance is achieved entirely physically, as she removes herself from the figure she has begun to form with her classmates. She shows no strong facial emotion and simply stands several feet apart from the group, looking a little indecisive, but not distressed. She seems undeterred both by Ms P's threat of punishment and her classmate's appeal: 'come in man'. It is when Ms M produces the camera to take the class photo that she gives in. I was not able to talk to Zara and could only manage a few words with her cousin at the end of the class, who seems to confirm that Zara's choice is motivated by her identity as a young Muslim woman.

Conclusion: becoming pupils in a school of immigrants

In becoming pupils at Roseland, the new arrivals are faced with two major tasks. The first is to develop, concurrently, their curriculum and English language knowledge. The second task, related more specifically to citizenship, is to negotiate ways of adapting to the demeanours, practices and values of an unfamiliar school setting.

The first task was well supported by Ms B, the Maths teacher. There was more evidence of learners' subject specific knowledge being enhanced in the Maths lessons I observed than in the English class. Maths lessons also offered stronger support for the development of *English*, providing more opportunities for sustained turns, than did subject English in the episodes featured here: language is certainly in play in the Phonics and Drama classes – often humorously in the margins of classroom interaction – but subject knowledge is interpreted broadly and multimodally as bodily expression in the case of Drama or stripped down to individual sounds in the phonics class. Even here however, pupils assert themselves as learners, showing resourcefulness and imagination to make meaning out of unpromising material. They claim spaces in which to develop their language and learning by pushing at the limits of a highly circumscribed curriculum regime.

The second task for the young people is harder: to resolve tensions between out of school identities, most obviously religious identity, and past experience of school, with the expectations of the new setting. Becoming a pupil is not just a matter of learning new, culturally mediated ways of schooling but also of exercising citizenship. At Roseland, individual rights are subordinated to responsibility to the group, evidenced strikingly in the uncompromising stance of Ms P when Zara silently claims the right of non-participation in the group activity. In Harris's (2007) terms, the emphasis is on social responsibility rather than freedom and autonomy. Citizenship

at Roseland is a collective performance whose successful outcome depends on the active involvement of each student, with no concession to matters of individual sensibility or affiliation. The emphasis is less on the personal rights of group members than conformity to the principle of teamwork. When Zara rejoins the group, Ms P's response is: 'we've got the whole class now'.

Note

1. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate in England. The Inspectorate regulates State schools and Children's services.

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Appendix 1. Notes on transcription

- P Pupil where learner is not identifiable
- Italics Emphasis
- // Double slash and phonetic transcription where phoneme is named or referred to; regular orthography in lower case to indicate the *making* of sounds, as in 'h h h hat'
- Bold An occasion when pupils or teachers offer a token as a response. For example **hat** is taken to mean the word 'hat'
- ... Unclear section on tape
- () An accompanying action