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An ethnographic study of students' oral performance in the mixed francophone-anglophone university classroom

TIMOTHY TOMLINSON*

ABSTRACT

Mixed francophone-anglophone classes have become an important, yet controversial feature of post-secondary education in Canada. However, arguments concerning the suitability (or lack thereof) of these classes have not been based on empirical research documenting what actually occurs in them. This paper describes an ethnographic case study which begins to address this need. The study examines the relationship between students' use of French and English in five mixed classes at a bilingual university and their access to subject-matter knowledge and social networks. Initial analyses reveal that language brokerage is an important process in two of the classes observed. In order to illustrate how this process works, an excerpt of classroom interaction is presented. The broader implications of language brokers are then discussed, with reference to recent work on mixed classes in Franco-Ontarian elementary and secondary schools. The paper concludes with suggestions for future research and a consideration of some policy implications of mixed classes.

RÉSUMÉ

Les classes mixtes qui accueillent à la fois des anglophones et des francophones sont devenues l'un des éléments essentiels, quoique très controversé, de l'enseignement post-secondaire au Canada. Toutefois, les arguments avancés soit en faveur de ces classes, soit contre elles, n'ont jamais jusqu'à présent été fondés sur une recherche empirique analysant ce qui s'y passe vraiment. Cet article présente une étude de cas, menée d'un point de vue ethnographique, dont le but

*Modern Language Centre, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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est de combler, pour la première fois nous semble-t-il, cette lacune. Cette étude examine le rapport que l'on peut établir entre l'emploi que les étudiants font de l'anglais et du français dans cinq classes mixtes choisies dans une université bilingue et, d'une part, leur capacité d'absorption du contenu d'une matière donnée, et, d'autre part, leurs possibilités d'insertion à certains réseaux d'interaction sociale. Les premières analyses révèlent que dans deux des classes observées, certains étudiants jouent le rôle d'"intermédiaires linguistiques" auprès de leurs pairs. Pour montrer comment s'introduit ce processus, l'auteur présente l'extrait d'une interaction dans une classe. Puis il discute des implications plus larges des "intermédiaires" linguistiques, en tenant compte des travaux récents sur les classes mixtes des écoles élémentaires et secondaires franco-ontariennes. Cette étude se termine par quelques suggestions de recherche et par la présentation de quelques aspects de l'existence de classes mixtes susceptibles d'avoir des conséquences administratives et pédagogiques.

One of the least understood, yet most striking features of bilingual education at the post-secondary level in Canada is the existence, and potential proliferation, of classes in which francophones and anglophones study a discipline together, whether the medium of instruction is French, English, or both languages.

Historically, four factors have contributed to the fact that mixed classes are more likely to occur in English- as opposed to French-medium courses. First, in some fields of specialization, offerings in French are scant or not within easy access, geographically speaking. This is much less often the case for English-medium instruction. Secondly, in the case of some disciplines available in both languages (e.g., sciences), students may opt for English, believing that it is the only (or primary) language in which they will find work in that field after graduation. Thirdly, francophone students, especially those from minority settings, have tended to reach a higher level of proficiency in English than anglophones do in French, and hence have been better prepared to cross over the language boundary. Finally, when francophones study in English, they seem to select courses that attract anglophones, whereas anglophones who study in French gravitate towards fields that generally do not interest francophones (i.e., French language, literature and linguistics).

There is one type of institution where, in spite of the above conditions, one has been apt to find a significant number of mixed francophone-anglophone classes taught in French. This is a bilingual university whose academic programs (excluding language departments) are structured so that, at any given time, some courses are offered in French and some in English, but few are available in both. Clearly, to have access to a broader range of courses, anglophones are motivated to study in French to some extent. Garigue (1985) refers to this approach as 'integrated' or 'individual' bilingualism.

There are good reasons to believe that we may see a significant increase in the number of integrated francophone-anglophone classes taught in French at unilingual and bilingual universities. For various reasons, including the increased value of bilingualism in the Canadian employment market, more students than ever before are pursuing part or all of their elementary and secondary education in French. The major groups involved are minority francophones who have fought long and hard for schooling in their mother tongue, and anglophones graduating from French immersion, Core and Extended programs. Both groups have expressed a desire to pursue their education in French at the post-secondary level (e.g., Churchill, Frenette & Quazi, 1985; Manzer, this issue).

There are various ways in which universities could attempt to meet the very different needs of the two groups. Some minority francophones have argued for French-language institutions with a homogenous francophone clientele (e.g., Tardif & McMahon, this issue). Another option is to create, within the same institution, parallel French-medium courses for anglophones and francophones. However, these solutions are not economically viable unless an adequate demand from both groups manifests itself within single or separate institutions. To date, this has not been the case and, thus, unilingual and bilingual universities have tried to meet the needs of both groups using mixed classes (Edwards, this issue; Ruest, 1988; Wesche, this issue).

In view of the place mixed classes already occupy in some universities and community colleges (e.g., Lortie, 1988) and the potential for their numbers to increase substantially in the 1990s, it is essential that post-secondary institutions study these classes as rigorously as possible in order that wise decisions be taken concerning them in the future.

In the present paper, the literature on mixed francophone-anglophone classes at the post-secondary level in Canada is reviewed. It is argued that the present paucity of empirical, classroom-based research makes it difficult to address in a rigorous way the controversial issue of whether mixed classes are a good thing or not. The subsequent sections of the paper describe an ethnographic study currently in progress which looks directly at the oral performance of students in mixed French- and English-medium classes in a bilingual university. Highlighted in this discussion is one of the more important aspects of classroom processes discovered thus far in my work, namely language brokers. The paper concludes with a discussion of directions for future research and implications for policy development.

ARE MIXED CLASSES A GOOD THING?: WHAT THE LITERATURE TELLS US

The issue of whether or not mixing francophone and anglophone students in the same class is a pedagogically sound practice has begun to attract more attention in recent years as a result of the more general discussion of post-secondary bilingual education (e.g., Mydlarski & West, 1985).

Inasmuch as mixed classes are locales for interethnic contact, it is appropriate to recall Amir's (1976) observation that the nature of that contact (not its mere existence) is crucial in determining whether it is beneficial for the groups involved. In the discussion about mixed classes, it is clear that minority francophones and majority anglophones have very different views about the linguistic and cultural implications of intergroup contact.

As for the minority francophone perspective, LeBlanc (1986) reports that some professors in Ontario are opposed to admitting French immersion students to courses aimed at francophones because they are seen to seek only bilingual competence, not a different cultural experience, and because some may reject the Franco-Ontarian vernacular as a legitimate variety of French in certain circumstances (the university classroom presumably being one such setting). They believe that immersion students would disrupt the dynamics of courses in which Franco-Ontarian social issues are debated. Similarly, Tardif and McMahon (this issue) argue that the preservation of the Franco-Albertan community is threatened when young Franco-Albertans, already reluctant to make their francophone background known, come in contact with immersion students who believe themselves capable of pronouncing on what French culture is in Canada.

Another concern voiced by minority francophones is the level of proficiency in French of immersion and other anglophone students. Tardif and McMahon (this issue) point out that immersion students are weaker in productive skills than native francophones, that they make non-native-like errors, and that consequently, they will jeopardize the francophone students' learning of both French and the subject matter. They argue that, in the Albertan context at least, the two groups might better be segregated.

In the Ontarian context, researchers are equally concerned about the language competence issue, although they do not seem to advocate a rigid protectionist policy for Franco-Ontarian students. For example, Mougeon (1987) proposes that only certain courses be reserved for francophones (e.g., history, French as first language (L1), and that elsewhere non-francophones be admitted if their command of French is such that their presence would not have a negative impact on other students' acquisition of French and course content. Parker and Bélanger (1987) go as far as to specify that only anglophones with native-like facility in French should be admitted.

The anglophone response to this latter point might be that non-native speakers cannot raise their second language (L2) proficiency to an academic, native-speaker level before actually studying with francophones. According to Wesche (this issue), they reach a point in their mastery of the L2 beyond which they cannot progress unless they receive the same language input as native speakers. They do not, however, receive such input in 'sheltered' or 'immersion' classes for non-native speakers (Wesche & Ready, 1985).

Some institutions have therefore encouraged students with more advanced L2 skills to take courses offered to native speakers, but have apparently concluded that the transition is a difficult one for them. Consequently, they have implemented or proposed various compensatory measures, many of which could

affect the academic and linguistic development of native-speaking students: the option of writing exams and essays in either language, the option of being graded on a 'pass-fail' basis, emphasis on tasks or assignments requiring receptive skills (i.e., listening, reading), giving more weight to content than to language in grading student performances, and so forth. (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989; Wesche, this issue). Migneron (1989) argues that native-speaking students do not complain about certain changes made to cater to the needs of non-natives, (e.g., slower delivery, using simpler language). However, there is no indication that these students were actually asked their opinion. In any case, it would seem prudent to assess each adaptation in light of the needs of native as well as of non-native speaking students.

As for the question of intercultural understanding, a study of Genesee, Morin and Allister (1974) found that attitudes toward French Canadians were more positive among French immersion students attending an otherwise all-French school than among immersion students attending an English school. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the study examined contact between minority anglophones and majority francophones in Quebec. To my knowledge, it has not yet been demonstrated that immersion (or other anglophone) students in contact with minority francophone students develop a genuine understanding of their language and culture.

What emerges from these arguments is a picture of mixed classes as places where anglophones have everything to gain, but where the francophone minority students might suffer linguistically and culturally until such time as the anglophones develop the necessary linguistic resources and an appreciation for the language and culture of their francophone peers.

Arguments that have been made for or against mixed classes in Canadian post-secondary institutions have rarely been based on empirical data on what actually transpires in the mixed classroom. What we have instead are enrolment statistics and reports of final grades. Clearly, data of this sort provide an inadequate basis for assessing the mixed-class approach to bilingual education. Final grades are important, but they by no means give us a complete picture of students' ability to acquire knowledge in a mixed classroom. In addition, we need to know to what extent students in mixed classes develop their bilingual proficiency through actual language use. Moreover, as the issue of students' intercultural understanding is central to the debate over integrated classes/schools, an investigation of patterns of social interaction and attitudes of francophones and anglophones who take courses together is required.

In the remainder of this paper, I will describe an ethnographic study of interaction in mixed classes which begins to address these and other issues of interest to post-secondary administrators and educators.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND SITE SELECTION

In 1988, I began a doctoral research study whose purpose was to explore the relationship between a university's ideology of individual bilingualism and the

performance of its students in face-to-face interaction in the classroom.

The site selected was Thorndale College[1], a small bilingual faculty within a larger university in Ontario. Thorndale has an explicit mission to graduate functionally bilingual students, i.e. individuals capable of gaining access to resources such as knowledge, social networks and jobs by using both English and French in face-to-face interaction. As well, it is more representative of Canadian universities than military colleges, who also are pursuing individual bilingualism.

The study focusses on mixed classes since they bring together francophones and anglophones seeking both types of resources, knowledge and social relationships, using their first language (L1), L2 or both. Moreover, in attempting to achieve its mandate, Thorndale has structured its programs and introduced many policies (e.g., special language credits) so as to encourage students to take discipline courses in their L2 with members of the target group. As a result, the College's *raison d'être* hinges in large measure on its ability to make the mixed-class approach work.

In all, five courses were selected, including two full-courses and one half-course in French (*psychologie, art dramatique* and *littérature française*) and two half-courses in English (sociology and meteorology)[2]. The courses accurately reflect the College's emphasis on liberal arts[3].

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The subjects participating in this research fell into four main categories: students, faculty, internal administrative and support staff, and external university and government officials. For the purpose of this paper, I shall focus on the classroom participants.

The student sample was divided into two groups. The first consists of students who participated in the classroom observational study. Table 1 shows the breakdown for this sample.

Subjects were classified according to the mother tongue(s) of their parents in which they have acquired at least some proficiency (in the home, at school or both). Adoption of the parents' language(s) is viewed here as a key indicator of a student's ethnolinguistic identity[4]. For anglophones, the only parental language passed on is English. Students with at least one French-speaking parent who themselves have some knowledge of French are considered francophones, even though other languages (including English) may be involved. Minority language students have adopted a different language, and possibly also English (but not French) from their parents. Within each group, there is considerable variability in terms of students' mastery of French, English and other languages, ranging from monolingualism to fluency in three languages. The sample as a whole reflects quite well the heterogeneity of Thorndale's student population, although francophones are overrepresented (45% in the sample, yet only 20% in the College). The proportion of females (73%) in the sample reflects the situation in the College as a whole.

Table 1
OBSERVATIONAL STUDY SAMPLE: SEX AND LANGUAGE/REGIONAL BACKGROUND

Background	Female	Male	Total
anglophone	33	10	43
minority language	20	8	28
Franco-Ontarian	16	2	18
Québécois	20	10	30
other francophone	6	5	11
Total	95	35	130

Table 2
STUDENT INTERVIEW SAMPLE: SEX AND LANGUAGE/REGIONAL BACKGROUND

Background	Female	Male	Total
anglophone	7	0	7
minority language	0	2	2
Franco-Ontarian	5	1	6
Québécois	4	3	7
other francophone	2	2	4
Total	18	8	26

This larger student sample was reduced to 26 for the purpose of conducting formal interviews with students of different language and regional backgrounds. The breakdown for this sample appears in Table 2. The reduced sample included students from all five courses observed, from all levels of academic study (i.e., years 1–4), from different age groups (e.g., mature students) and from different educational backgrounds (e.g., graduates of bilingual school, French school, immersion school, Core programs, etc.).

The sample for faculty interviews was drawn from virtually every academic unit in the College and included the instructors of the five courses observed. The anglophones interviewed included 4 females and 6 males, while the francophone group is composed of 2 females and 5 males whose regional origins include Ontario, Québec, France and North Africa. The sample is believed to be fairly representative of Thorndale's faculty, although exact information on the breakdown is unavailable.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

As stated earlier, the purpose of this research was to determine how and to what extent the students of Thorndale College are using both French and English in the mixed classroom in order to obtain subject matter knowledge and to form friendship ties. The problem consists in discovering links between students' communicative strategies and resulting shorter- and longer-term outcomes, and

then explaining those links in terms of students' linguistic and social background knowledge and expectations, and in light of processes originating within and beyond the classroom which define and constrain interaction there.

A critical ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis was adopted. At the end of this section, I will describe the 'critical' aspect of this research. Ethnography was the preferred approach because it allows one to justify claims as to the relationships between various naturally occurring phenomena by appealing to empirical data on the processes which link them and by remaining true to the meanings events have for the actors involved in them (Erickson, 1986; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). The problem described above clearly requires a close examination of processes which link various phenomena. This would not be possible using a positivist approach where observations are done over a short period of time with the eventual aim of testing the statistical significance of relationships between pre-determined, pre-labelled variables[5].

The collection and analysis of data involved shifting one's attention from what could be observed in the immediate, local (proximal) circumstances of face-to-face interaction, to important non-local (distal) contextual information (Mehan, 1987). For ease of presentation, I will begin with the local level and work outwards to the non-local level.

Participant-observation was used to gain an experiential understanding of life in the mixed class. Classroom visits varied in number from 7 to 14 per course and generally lasted the full three-hour duration of the class. For each one, extensive field-notes were taken before, during and after class and during breaks. After the fourth or fifth visit, video-recordings were made and occasionally supplemented with audio-recordings. Episodes selected on the basis of their significance for access to knowledge and friendship were then transcribed and analyzed using concepts from the ethnography of communication (e.g., Hymes, 1972; Philips, 1972) conversational analysis (e.g., Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) and interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, 1982, 1986). Space does not permit a full discussion of these approaches, however, the sample analysis presented below will provide some sense of what is involved.

Using these methods, it was possible to show how students' communicative and discourse strategies are linked to immediate/local outcomes (e.g., peer or professor feedback; obtaining the floor; accomplishing a group task; making a new friend). Furthermore, other local-level data such as the spatial, temporal and other features of classroom organization could be brought to bear in explaining those links. For example, it was clear in the course '*art dramatique*' that students gained greater access to interethnic friendships because they had to perform orally in front of their peers and collectively negotiate meaning with them during paired and small-group tasks.

Nevertheless, it was clear that a full account of students' language use in mixed classes would require data from other sources. Early in each course, brief, informal interviews were done with all students participating in the project. As the courses unfolded, some of the students were approached for longer, semi-directed,

formal interviews. The latter type of interview was also used with faculty, administrators, governors and government officials, although obviously the substantive content varied considerably. The other type of collection technique employed beyond the classroom was the perusal of site documents such as minutes of faculty meetings, internal committee reports, and reports of grades and course enrolments.

These sources broadened the data base on students' language use practices by providing reports of language use in other settings on the Thorndale campus (e.g., in other courses). As well, they provided key information on the outcomes of both reported and observed oral performance in the very domains in which valued resources are distributed: a) studies (e.g., grades; choice of major field; choice of language of instruction), b) social life (e.g., nature of relations with members of various groups), and c) employment (e.g., career choices).

At this point, a discussion of the 'critical' nature of this approach to data analysis is in order, as it draws heavily on data obtained from the non-local sources (i.e., interviews and site documents). In the context of the present study, we can understand students' language use patterns as responses to the local speech economy of the College and its processes of social selection (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). To borrow Bourdieu's (1977) economic metaphor, we can view universities as market places where certain valued resources are distributed. Access to those markets and resources is contingent upon one's possession of (or willingness and ability to acquire) the particular language varieties (i.e., linguistic capital) and world knowledge, values, beliefs and conventions of behaviour (i.e., cultural capital) deemed acceptable by those controlling the market.

In some situations, it is university administrators and faculty who regulate access to markets in this way. This control is exerted through such institutional processes as recruitment, mother tongue and second language placement testing, bilingual competence certification, advising, and various support services (e.g., counselling, writing workshops). And of course, it also manifests itself in classroom teaching and evaluation practices.

In other situations both inside and outside the classroom, the peer group controls access to valued resources (e.g., knowlege and friendship). Of course, these markets may differ considerably in terms of the value placed on different types of linguistic and cultural capital and in the processes by which social selection occurs.

For a variety of reasons (e.g., past experiences in learning and using language; class and ethnic background), the students of Thorndale College arrive with very different types of linguistic and cultural capital and very different attitudes and expectations regarding the value of the resources at stake and of various types of capital. In other words, they do not all occupy the same position in the local speech economy and consequently, do not have equal chances for success. Inequality is not merely the lot of individuals. Rather, it tends to affect entire social groups (often the lower classes and ethnic minorities) who fall victim to the domination and repression of more powerful groups.

Underlying research of this sort is not merely a social critique, but an attempt to emancipate individuals (and groups) from sources of political, cultural and linguistic hegemony (Anderson, 1989). Ethnography can contribute to social change not only by making those in positions of power sensitive to the inequalities inherent in educational systems, but also by suggesting ways these inequalities can be redressed through pedagogical practice (e.g., Heller, 1989b; Heller & Barker, 1988; Welch, 1985) or other means.

SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: LANGUAGE BROKERS IN THE MIXED CLASSROOM

The study described above is presently in the analysis phase, with only a small amount of data collection remaining to be done. Although analyses done to date must be considered tentative, it is possible at this stage to bring some of them to bear on the question raised at the outset: are mixed classes a good thing? Indeed, one of the most interesting findings to emerge thus far is the presence of language brokers in two of the five classes observed. I use this term to refer to individuals who communicate on behalf of others whose linguistic resources are in some way insufficient to allow them to participate fully in the situation at hand. In many cases, brokers are called upon to communicate across the boundary between ethnic groups who are unable to speak or understand fluently each other's language or dialect (Barth, 1969).

Given that language brokerage occurs in at least some mixed classes, an answer to our initial question must inevitably include an answer to a second question: are language brokers a good thing? In an attempt to begin addressing this issue, let us consider an excerpt from the course '*l'art dramatique*'.

Language brokers at work: an excerpt of classroom talk

The episode occurred in the first class held after the reading week break in the fall term. This session marked my fifth visit to the class, and the second one in which video-recording had been used. The excerpt took place within the second of two improvisation exercises the class performed prior to the mid-class break. The purpose of improvisations in this course was to develop students' confidence, creativity, voice projection and other skills which would be needed later in the year when they performed a play for the College community.

The first activity, "*le jeu de la sculpture*" was entirely non-verbal. However, in this one, which is never given a specific label, the 17 students who make up this class are seated in a large circle on the floor of Thorndale Theatre with their legs spread wide apart. A student is given a tennis ball and must spontaneously compose the first part of a sentence. He or she then rolls the ball along the floor to a second student, who must complete the sentence begun by the first student. The second student starts a new sentence, which does not have to bear any relationship to the first. He or she rolls the ball to a third student, and the game continues as

described until the professor, who has been walking slowly around the outside of the circle during this time, decides to announce 'la pause' (i.e., break).

The participants in this episode include Professor Dion (Pr), a male francophone from Quebec and the following students:

Heather (**H**) – a Franco-Ontarian in 2nd year
Melissa (**M**) –a Franco-Ontarian in 1st year
Jacqueline (**J**) – a Québécoise in 2nd year
Annick (**A**) – a French mature student in 1st year
Lise (**L**) – a Québécoise mature student in 3rd year
Sandra (**S**) – an English-dominant Greek Canadian in 3rd year
Véronique (**V**) – a Québécoise CEGEP student in her 1st year at Thorndale (but officially in 2nd year)
Tom (**T**) – an English-dominant Greek Canadian in 3rd year
Phillipe (**P**) – a French 'lecteur' (T.A.) visiting for 1 year
Yvan (**Y**) – a Québécois CEGEP student in his 1st year at Thorndale (but officially in 2nd year)

Their interaction unfolds as follows[6]:

1 **H**: *Pour mon anniversaire, mon frère m'a donné un* [rolls ball
2 to T]
FOR MY BIRTHDAY, MY BROTHER GAVE ME A
3 **T**: *Un cadeau/un cadeau que j'ai détesté et je l'ai jeté tout*
4 *de suite.*
A GIFT/A GIFT WHICH I HATED AND I THREW IT OUT IMMEDIATELY.
5 **Ss**: [a few Ss laugh lightly]
6 **Pr**: (Recommence.)
(START AGAIN)
7 **T**: [looks at Pr, puzzled]
(1.0)
8 **Pr**: *Projetez, projetez bien.*
PROJECT, PROJECT WELL
9 **T**: [looks down at floor, rolls ball in hand] (3.0) Je suis
10 *sorti l'autre jour et* (2.5) [look of frustration] *y avait*
11 *beaucoup de nu/nuages et* [looks up, rolls ball to M]
I WENT OUT
THE OTHER DAY AND ... THERE WERE A LOT CL/CLOUDS AND
(3.0)
12 **M**: [looks at T, leans forward, laughs] (0.5) *Je n'ai pas entendu la*
13 *dernière partie de la phrase.*
I DIDN'T HEAR
THE LAST PART OF THE SENTENCE.
[
14 **P**: *Y a beaucoup de nuages.*
THERE ARE LOTS OF CLOUDS.
[

15 **J**: *Y AVAIT BEAUCOUP DE*
16 *NUAGES=*
THERE WERE A LOT OF CLOUDS.
17 **M**: *=Y avait beaucoup de nuages et aussitôt que j'ai sorti, le nuage*
18 *(uh était) par-dessus ma tête et um* (0.5) *il a (a arrêté)*
THERE WERE A LOT OF CLOUDS AND AS SOON AS I WENT OUT,
THE CLOUD (UH WAS) ABOVE MY HEAD AND UM IT
(STOPPED)
(3.0)
19 **A**: *Plu?*
RAINED?
20 **(?)**: *(Plu)=*
(RAINED)
21 **M**: *=Il a plu sur ma (lettre). Um*: (2.0) *en arrivant* (1.0) *à=*
IT RAINED ON MY (LETTER). UM AS I ARRIVED AT
[
22 **L**: *Oui.*
YES
23 **M**: *=l'école ce matin, j'ai: marché sur l'herbe* (0.5) *et puis*
24 *j'ai* [rolls ball to S]
SCHOOL THIS MORNING, I: WALKED ON THE GRASS AND THEN I
(2.5)
25 **(?)**: [laughs]
26 **S**: *Tu as marché où?* [looks intently at M]
YOU WALKED WHERE?
27 **M**: *Sur l'herbe.*
ON THE GRASS.
(1.0)
28 **S**: [still looking at M, as if confused]
29 **L**: *L'herbe.* [S turns and looks at L] Grass.
THE GRASS.
[
30 **J**: grass.=
31 **P**: =Grass.=
32 **Pr**: *L'herbe.*
THE GRASS.
33 **S**: [turns and looks toward middle of circle, perhaps at M,
34 then gazes at floor] *Puis tout à coup, j'ai glissé sur*
35 *l'herbe et j'ai cassé mon jambe.* [looks up at Pr, then
36 shifts gaze to center of circle] (2.0) *Cette fin de*
37 *semaine, c'était ma fête et: je suis sortie dans un bar et*
38 *puis* [looks to right, then to center as she rolls ball to
39 V] *un (garlé)* (0.5)
THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN, I SLIPPED ON

THE GRASS AND I BROKE MY LEG ... THIS WEEKEND, IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY AND: I WENT OUT TO A BAR AND THEN A (GARLÉ)

40 **V**: *Un quoi?=*
A WHAT?

41 **S**: *Un /gar/* [as in *gare*]=
A GUY.

42 **L**: *Un gars.*
A GUY.

43 **S**: *Un garçon.*
A BOY.

44 **V**: *M'a* [smiles as she looks at L]
ME

45 **Y**: *M'a:?*
ME

46 **V**: *M'a payé une bouteille de champagne.*
BOUGHT ME A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

47 **Ss**: Ooh:: [teasing tone]

48 **A**: [giggles loudly]

The nature of this activity is such that it cannot advance unless students are able to understand and orally produce utterances in French in a very limited amount of time. Unlike other types of classroom activities (e.g., lectures), breakdowns in communication must be resolved 'on the spot', not after class or at the break (as one *Québécois* girl did with her professor in the sociology course). In this particular class, such breakdowns occur for various reasons and students employ different strategies to overcome them.

Composing sentences spontaneously in front of one's peers and the professor is hard enough even for native francophones, since it requires a quick imagination. For an anglophone, the challenge may even be greater, depending on one's ease in the second language. After two long pauses, Tom tries to finish his part-sentence quickly, but stumbles over the word *nuages* (1. 11). Melissa is unable to complete the sentence, claiming that she didn't hear what Tom just said. To be certain, the acoustics in the room make hearing what others are saying difficult at times, but in this instance, Tom seems to have projected his voice well (as Professor Dion had instructed in 1. 8), especially since Phillipe, sitting beside Melissa, was able to understand him (1. 14). It seems more likely that she had trouble when Tom mispronounced *nuages*. The problem is resolved when two francophone students repeat *nuages* (note that Jacqueline, being farther away from Melissa than Phillipe is, speaks much more loudly than he does).

A similar breakdown occurs at the end of this excerpt when Sandra, another anglophone who is less proficient in French than Tom, mispronounces the word *gars*. Her *Québécoise* interlocutor, Véronique, seeks clarification (1. 40), but when Sandra again mispronounces the word, Lise steps in to help (1. 42). Lise frequently plays the role of language broker in this course, which is not surprising

given the fact that not only has she become bilingual as a result of living in Ontario, but she has also been teaching French as a second language for several years and is therefore aware of anglophones' struggle to speak French. Interestingly, even after Lise's assistance, Sandra tries to resolve the problem further by proposing *garçon* (which she pronounces well) as an equivalent for *gars*. This strategy achieves two functions. First, it resolves the communication problem for Véronique. Second, it allows Sandra to show her professor and peers that she is capable of getting her message across on her own, thus validating as it were her membership in this class.

Francophones, in particular Franco-Ontarians, also benefit from peer help when they struggle to compose a sentence orally. For example, in line 18, Melissa cannot seem to find a word. Her hesitation may be due simply to indecision as to which verb she wants to use (e.g., *pleuvoir* as opposed to the vernacular variant *mouiller*). However, it seems more likely that it results from a lack of grammatical proficiency (i.e., difficulty with the past participle of the verb *pleuvoir*), since she so readily accepts the word *plu* supplied to her by Annick and another student. In less formal settings, and even in other classroom events, Melissa switches to English when she cannot readily think of words in French; but this strategy is usually employed for lexical items or entire phrases, not grammatical elements.

In line 44, another francophone, Véronique, hesitates in producing an utterance, and her boyfriend Yvan (also francophone) sitting close by prods her on. However, Véronique's hesitation is very short, and her smile before speaking seems to indicate that she already knows what she's going to say and is anticipating her interlocutors' reaction, which comes in lines 47-48. In this instance, there is no communication problem, and thus no need for language brokers.

Thus far, we have examined cases where the brokerage process has helped overcome breakdowns due to difficulties in oral production experienced by anglophones and Franco-Ontarians. The same process is used when the hearer's lack of linguistic competence makes it impossible for him/her to understand the speaker's well-formed utterance. Lack of French vocabulary on Sandra's part is clearly what causes the breakdown in communication in lines 26 and 28. At first, Melissa thinks Sandra simply did not hear the word *l'herbe*, so she repeats it (1. 27). But Sandra's facial expression and silence make it clear to everyone present that she does not know what *l'herbe* means. Three francophone students (Lise, Jacqueline and Phillipe), all quite proficient in English, play the role of language broker by translating the word for Sandra. Although the professor does not explicitly discourage this strategy, he chooses instead to reinforce Sandra's acquisition of the French word by repeating it (1. 32), and she is able to use it well in completing Melissa's sentence.

Broader implications of the language broker process

In the preceding analysis, we have seen that, on the most local level, the brokerage process allows students to overcome communication problems and get on with the

activity at hand. In this sense, it can be viewed as a positive feature of mixed classes.

However, if we consider the implications of language brokers within the broader framework of the study (and of Thorndale's mandate), it is less clear that brokering is a good thing in mixed classes. Certainly, it would seem to be beneficial for the persons on whose behalf the broker is communicating. It allows them to remain in the class and gain access to knowledge. As well, through the broker, these students establish ties to a new peer group much more quickly than might otherwise be the case. At the same time, by gaining access to interactions with stronger speakers, they have an opportunity to improve their language skills.

Recent studies by Heller and associates (Heller, 1984, 1987, 1989a, 1989b; Heller and Barker, 1988) in the French schools of Toronto appear to confirm these hypotheses. They have shown, for example, that French-dominant students gain access to the peer group, which tends to use English, by forming close relationships with bilingual brokers. Moreover, these same students often act as brokers between their less French-proficient peers and the teacher in academic activities requiring standard French. In small-group tasks, they create opportunities for weaker students to contribute their ideas and ensure that these ideas are expressed in an appropriate form. At the same time, they depend on bilingual group members to keep them posted (in French) as to what has been discussed in English to that point. Hence, the brokerage process seems to work in both directions in the case of cooperative group tasks. Finally, it allows French-dominant students to learn English and other students (anglophones or francophones who master only vernacular varieties of French) to learn standard French.

What about the broker's access to knowledge and social networks and his or her linguistic development? It may be that the broker role helps students to develop communicative skills that the typical learner roles does not. For example, to the extent that brokers must consciously deal with issues of intercomprehension involving two other parties, their metalinguistic knowledge may be enhanced in unique ways. Furthermore, research in Toronto's French schools (Heller, 1989a, 1989b; Heller & Barker, 1988) seems to indicate that, in small-group activities, French-dominant students sometimes employ a range of communicative/discourse strategies in carrying out their role as brokers.

On the other hand, one could imagine situations where, in spending time assisting linguistically weaker students, brokers are not developing new linguistic resources. In the excerpt presented above, it is likely that the only linguistic benefits to accrue to the francophone brokers would be a heightened metalinguistic awareness. Rather, one might say that language brokering merely slows the progression of the activity, and thus, reduces the brokers' access to content-knowledge. A similar point is made by Mougeon (1987) with reference to classes in French schools where the teacher must simplify and decelerate the presentation of academic content in order to accommodate students '*parlant peu ou pas français*' (Desjarlais, Brûlé & Gauthier, 1980).

Finally, as concerns the broker's formation of friendship ties, Heller (1989a)

suggests that French-dominant students often avoid being marginalized by their peers by adopting the broker role in classroom activities. This may lead members of the peer group to accord them a higher status, thereby further facilitating the brokers' integration into the peer network. This integration may require the francophones to adopt English as the sole language of peer-group socializing. On the other hand, the francophones' high status position may allow them to establish French as a valid language for such contexts. In either case, the brokers would have an opportunity to develop their verbal repertoire in a different social context.

It is clear that an assessment of the true impact of language brokering on the formation of social relations will require an ethnographic study of students' face-to-face interactions both inside and outside the classroom. Although my own research involves observation of students in out-of-class campus settings (e.g., cafeteria, corridors), these observations do not focus specifically on students involved in the broker process of the mixed classroom. Hence, as is the case with most issues concerning the assessment of language brokering, more research will be needed.

CONCLUSION: FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS

On the whole, research has very little to tell us about what happens in mixed francophone-anglophone classes in Canadian universities. Spurred on by the French immersion phenomenon, researchers have thus far focussed on 'sheltered' classes for non-native speakers. However, whether one invokes economic or ideological reasons, it would seem that the mixing of francophones and anglophones in discipline courses is inevitable. Educational researchers will therefore have to tackle the pedagogical, social, political, economic and other ramifications of this reality.

In this paper, I have argued for a critical ethnographic approach which takes into account the interests of both anglophones and francophones as they attempt to deal with the speech economy and processes of social selection operating in their particular setting. As with all case studies, the findings of the ethnographic study described here cannot be generalized to account for what occurs in other institutions. Indeed, this fact alone would compel one to begin designing further studies of mixed classes in other universities and community colleges across Canada. Among other things, such research should look more closely at the development of literacy skills in French and English, given that these are indispensable in students' access to knowledge and better employment opportunities. As well, future research should investigate what happens in mixed classes where pedagogical innovations have been made that bear directly on the performance of students enrolled in them. Adjunct courses (Migneron, 1989; Wesche, this issue) and bilingual courses (where both French and English are used in the course materials, professor's lectures and seminar discussions and written/oral assignments) are examples of such innovations.

It is certain that research on mixed classes will have significant implications for academic and administrative policy development in universities and community colleges across Canada. For one thing, there may be a need to review policies concerning access to mixed classes. For example, one might envision more rigorous linguistic criteria. This would in turn affect language training programs (L1 and L2) at both the secondary and post-secondary level, influencing the way in which such innovations as adjunct L2 courses evolve. Language training may need to be reviewed in terms of the cultural component, so as, for example, to sensitize anglophone students more to the lived experience of francophone minorities and to instill in francophone students a stronger sense of and confidence in their cultural and linguistic identity.

Changes in the pedagogical practices used in mixed classes may also be placed on the agenda. The latter changes might involve adapting the (linguistic and academic) content as well as the form (e.g., classroom organization, materials) of instruction and evaluation, better to meet the needs of the various groups. Of course, such adaptations will heighten the need for in-service training for faculty, something which is sorely lacking. It may necessitate the expansion of bilingual academic support services such as library holdings (and audio-visual materials), counselling and advising, writing workshops, and so forth.

Inasmuch as part of the bilingual/bicultural ideology is the development of social relations in French and English between the two groups, some universities may see the need to change the existing milieu of the campus in order to make francophones and anglophones feel comfortable using both languages outside the classroom. By doing this, they would be viewing bilingual education in the more holistic sense as an endeavour whose goal is to develop the students' sense of self to the fullest.

NOTES

1 In order to ensure the anonymity of subjects in my study, pseudonyms have been used for all participants as well as for the institution, its departments, course titles, and so forth.

2 Henceforth, titles of courses which were taught in French appear here written in French. Similarly, titles of English-medium courses appear in English.

3 I had hoped to include a course taught bilingually in the sample, but was not able to obtain access.

4 Individual students may use different criteria (e.g., language dominance) to identify themselves and hence, consider themselves as belonging to a different group. For example, some subjects I refer to as 'Franco-Ontarian' call themselves anglophones, despite the fact that one or both of their parents speak French and they too have some knowledge of it. Of course, the way in which students identify themselves has important consequences for their face-to-face interactions.

5 Recent examples of ethnographic approaches applied to Canadian education include Heller (1989a, 1989b), Heller and Barker (1988), and Tardif and Weber (1987).

6 The following transcription conventions have been adopted:
- speakers' utterances appear in lowercase
- round brackets indicate transcriber's doubt concerning utterances contained within them, or in the case of figures, the number of seconds elapsed between utterances
- colons indicate elongation of preceding sound
- oblique slashes indicate false starts

- square brackets contain descriptive comments of the transcriber
- a single left square bracket indicates the point at which an overlap between utterances of two different speakers begins
- an equal sign indicates that the current speaker's turn-at-talk continues onto the next line of text uttered by that person, or that the next speaker's turn is latched onto the last word of the current speaker's utterance
- original (French) utterances spoken in a louder voice appear in uppercase
- English translations appear in uppercase below the French utterances
- where a line number in the left column is underlined (e.g., 14), this is to indicate a point in the episode where language brokers intervene

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