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## **Stance, Identity, and Marginalization: A Micro-ethnographic Study in an ESL Biology Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

Adolescent newcomer programs respond to superdiverse demographic shifts and, in the United States, are designed to support students with English language acquisition and preparation for mainstream or bilingual education. This eight-month micro-ethnographic study examines a specific multilingual, multicultural group in an ESL biology classroom at a Central Ohio adolescent newcomer program and explores the stances group members take toward a Somali female student, Farin. Employing evaluating and positioning as stance-taking (Du Bois, 2007), we investigate how Farin's participation is evaluated and how her social identities are constructed in her group interaction. Over a series of classroom events, the group members take up regressive stances based on local ideologies about silence and appropriate group participation. These thicken over time despite various moves Farin makes to assert a positive group identity. This study underscores the potential consequences of teacher's evaluation of students' language in that students often employ the stance in constructing their relationships and identities, thus reinforcing particular ideologies associated with teacher's epistemic stance.

### **Keywords**

Bilingual education, superdiversity, stance-taking, identity, marginalization, micro-ethnography

## **1 Introduction**

The United States has a long and tortured history with non-European, non-English speaking populations, especially first peoples, enslaved people, or immigrants. Throughout, educational language policies and practices have vacillated between efforts to eradicate, restrict, tolerate, or support the languages people use in their private and public lives (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). To improve this situation for

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minoritized peoples, an array of approaches has emerged; for example, culturally sustaining programs such as Afrocentric schools, bi/multilingual schools of varying designs, or specialized English (or other national target language) programs. Among these are adolescent newcomer programs, a relatively new educational model, that respond to superdiverse demographic shifts (Vertovec, 2007). Superdiversity is characterized by highly mobile, complex, and unpredictable migration patterns over a relatively short period of time (Blommaert, 2013). Critically, adolescent newcomer programs seek to address the often problematic experiences of adolescent newcomers in mainstream schools (e.g., Bal, 2014). As newcomers face the possibility of a significantly higher dropout rate than their native-born or childhood arriving peers (Fry, 2005; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010), newcomer programs may offer a supportive space.

In the United States, despite the emerging consensus that bilingual programming is best for newcomer students (Valentino & Reardon, 2015), there remains a significant lack of bilingual programs and resources for all newcomers and especially adolescents (Lewis & Gray, 2016). Indeed, the Center for Applied Linguistics' Secondary Newcomer Program database lists only seven out of 63 programs as bilingual (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2014). Thus, most adolescent newcomer students are placed in various types of English as a Second Language (ESL) programming including push-in/pull-out, sheltered sites, or, the focus of this article, one-to-two year transitional adolescent newcomer programs.

Although there has been research into adolescent newcomer programs, it is not vast or particularly clear in terms of its research questions, methodologies, or outcomes, focusing rather on general program features, broad theoretical constructs, or recommendations (e.g. Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017; Short & Boyson, 2012). Ethnographic studies of these programs have tended towards narrative journalism that explores newcomer student journeys, often employing victory narratives (e.g. Hauser, 2012), or pedagogical innovations in schools such as the Internationals Network, a particular form of newcomer program that boasts robust student success through, in part, its use of multilingual, heterogeneous collaborative groups for classroom work (García & Sylvan, 2011). More rare are studies that probe the complex challenges that adolescent newcomers face as they try, through cycles of relative successes and failures, to shape positive identities with others and remain invested in the learning process (Bartlett, 2007).

This article explores this gap by closely investigating the evolving social structure of a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom in an adolescent newcomer program in Central Ohio, a region that has experienced superdiverse demographic change in the past 20 years due to globalization, migration flows, and deindustrialization (Longworth, 2009). This article focuses on the experiences of one three-person multilingual, heterogeneous group of students in a 10<sup>th</sup> grade Biology class taught by a multilingual teacher with specialized training including both content area licensure as well as a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Through micro-ethnographic discourse analysis, this study examines through the lens of stance-taking (Du Bois, 2007) the construction of social identity for Farin, a female Somali student with respect to the class and, especially, her two other male group members Ben and Ken (all names are pseudonyms).

By providing a detailed description of consequential progression of stance-taking on construction of one's identity, this study contributes to the literature by problematizing some of the pedagogical confidence in the multilingual, heterogeneous group and encourages TESOL policymakers and practitioners to consider a broader array of program and classroom structures to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

Studies on identity have illuminated how people negotiate, construct, or resist complex and shifting social roles across various contexts, including schools, and are invested in achieving various personal and social goals (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Norton, 2013; Wortham & Reyes, 2015). People pursue these ends through language, including all aspects of communicative interactions including spoken/written

words, gestures, and silence. In line with sociocultural views of identity, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define identity as “the social positioning of self and others” (p. 586).

To examine the discursive construction of positioning and social identities in interactions, we employed the concept of stance from sociolinguistics. Stance has been employed to examine identity as constructed in and through interactions because identities are often linguistically indexed through the stances interlocutors take and respond to (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Jaffe (2009a) also argues for the usefulness of stance as a way to understand “the link between individual performance and social meaning” (p. 4). Similarly, Du Bois (2007) defines stance as a social action, “achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field” (p. 163).

To identify the intersubjective process of co-constructing one’s social identities for this study, we employed Du Bois’s evaluation and position as stance-taking acts respectively defined as “the process whereby a stancetaker orients to an object of stance [the target toward which the evaluation orients to] and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value” and as “the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking sociocultural value” (p. 143). As a social act, stance cannot be divorced from its context in which a speaker who is responsible for a particular stance locates his/her stance in the communicative means. Du Bois stresses the importance of looking at “how speakers realize stances and how hearers interpret their situated meanings” (p. 145). In analyzing Farin’s discursively evolving social identities in this classroom context, we found Du Bois’s concept of stance useful for the following two reasons.

First, Du Bois’s (2007) stance is a social act made publicly visible through language-in-use by interactants. Thus, we attended not to how given social categories define the students but rather how these students employed the social categories to identify each other and how they claimed, challenged, and negotiated their ascribed and imposed identities. By employing Du Bois’s stance acts of evaluating and positioning, we focused attention on what were the referential objects or targets to which the evaluation was directed and how these students positioned themselves and their peers, especially Farin, about the object of evaluation.

Second, Du Bois’s (2007) stance puts dialogicality at the center of stance-taking. In this sense, stance-taking is not an independent but rather a social act contingent on the context of what is going on and responding to a stance that the speaker’s interactants have already taken. Du Bois calls the language structure of the utterance people produce by “reproducing elements of a prior speaker’s utterance” as dialogic syntax. For instance, in the analysis of the collected data, Ben and Ken’s indexically incorporating each other’s prior stance in their dialogue develops their shared dominance in the group and thickens Farin’s identity in the group.

In sum, stance-taking provides a framework to explore how one’s identity is socially built upon one’s positioning of himself/herself and others in interaction. This positioning, in turn, is linked to the available range of ideological associations between semiotic forms and meanings. These may include ideologies based on macro-categories such as ethnicity or race or more micro possibilities such as whether a person is viewed as being knowledgeable, trustworthy, or collaborative. The creation of these ideological associations between semiotic forms and social meaning is indexed through language-in-use as people adopt, reinforce, or resist the ideologies their interlocutors import.

### 3 Methodology

We employed an micro-ethnographic approach (Bloome et al., 2005) to understanding the complex daily life of a particular classroom. In order to capture and describe this phenomenon in context, language-in-use in people’s interaction has been the focus. The data analyzed here are part of a corpus of data

collected over eight months and including 20 classroom observations with fieldnotes, simultaneous 32 hours of full-class audio-video recordings, three 30-minute interviews/playback sessions with the teacher, 20-minute interviews with the focal students (three times with Farin, one Ben, and one Ken) and instructional assistant, and artifact collection of quizzes, handouts, and student work.

### **3.1 Research site and participants**

The research site was a 10th-grade ESL biology classroom at an adolescent newcomer program in Central Ohio. The participants in this research were taught by a white American male teacher who is multilingual in Spanish/Somali and with a M.Ed. in Science education as well as an endorsement in TESOL. At the time of researching, the teacher had worked in the focal program for four years, with two initially as a bilingual assistant and then two, following receiving his M.Ed., as a full-time teacher. In addition, the class had a bilingual (Serbian-English) assistant with a master's degree from a U.S. university. Students in the classroom were 16 to 20 years old and diverse in terms of home language, duration of previous formal education, length of residency in the USA, and their emergent English language proficiency. The full class had two students with Somali as home language, six Nepali, five French, one Swahili, and five Spanish. The class was a double period, continuing for 105 minutes from 7:30 to 9:15am without break.

In class, the teacher arranged the students around four large tables in groups of three to five with each group having a table leader expected to help other students in the group and liaise with the teacher. The teacher changed these groups frequently throughout the year, particularly at the beginning of each quarter, to achieve a number of goals including managing the class proactively by combining or separating various students and creating new possibilities for students to get to know each other by balancing groups with different genders, abilities, and home languages. In general, these groups were designed to be linguistically heterogeneous, built on the hope or assumption that English would be the group's lingua franca.

The focal group that was created on March 2, 2016 originally had four members, Ben, Jon, Nora, and Farin. Ben was a 15-year-old male Spanish speaker, Jon a 17-year-old male Spanish speaker, Nora a 19-year old Arabic speaker, and Farin a 20-year-old female Somali speaker. Farin had been in the school approximately two and a half years at the time of being observed, which was her first formal education experience in the US. The teacher identified Jon as the table leader or group communicator based on Jon's perceived skill in this area. However, two critical changes occurred in the group that the teacher did not anticipate, indicative of the aforementioned mobility, complexity, and unpredictability of this program. First, Nora was not in school on March 2 and actually had left the school to move to Arizona earlier that week, so the teacher assigned Ken, a 14-year-old male French and Swahili speaker, to the group. Next, Jon was a highly mobile student throughout the classroom time, visiting different groups as a regular characteristic of his classroom practice. After Ken joined the group, Jon started to visit other groups more frequently and was eventually observed on April 13 staying with another group. When the teacher was asked if this move was acceptable, he said, "I don't have a problem with it" and positioned the change as an opportunity for Ken or Brian to lead the group. Thus, approximately five weeks after the teacher made the new group, two of the four members had changed, leaving Ben, Ken, and Farin. Later, the teacher explicitly identified Ben and Ken as co-leaders of this group and asked Farin on one occasion to "follow their work."

Ben, Ken, and Farin worked together as a group for approximately one month in Spring 2016 starting the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April until the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of May. This article focuses on this group because of the fact that the changes to the group members had a significant impact on the group dynamics, particularly in terms of Farin's identity construction. After Jon left the group, the three students began to work together and, as the data below will show, the relationship among the group members and the interactions evolved in

ways that both the researchers and the teacher marked as problematic.

### 3.2 Positionality and recursive data analysis

Drawing upon ethnography as a logic-of-inquiry (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003), we were present in the classroom regularly (at least weekly) and participated in classroom events as requested by the students and teachers. This participant observation allowed some balance between researching and assisting as we collected and constructed records of classroom culture and interpreted them in an abductive way (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012). All activities that involved the focal participants were documented in the first author's fieldnotes, and the focal group interactions that occurred within the events were transcribed by both authors. Then, both authors identified moments when participants' language explicitly displayed their stance by positioning or evaluating, following Du Bois's (2007) attention to linguistic forms. For example, when participants say evaluative predicates such as "good" or "that's right," we identified the utterances of evaluation as acts of stance-taking. Similarly, when Ben said "she don't know," we identified it as positioning because it presented Farin as ignorant. However, as Jaffe (2009a) stressed, "stance is not transparent in either the linguistic or the sociolinguistic, but must be inferred from the empirical study of interactions in social and historical context" (p. 4). Thus, we found that most stance acts emerging were not explicit but implicit and subtle so that we focused on process in which particular utterances were perceived and interpreted. This focus on process also included what was talked about and how it was taken-up and topicalized. In this sense, after we identified segments of interactions where Farin and her participation was topicalized, we looked at how her utterances (both verbal and non-verbal) were taken up by others. Oftentimes, central to our analysis was not the interlocutors' oral speech but their embodied actions including posture, bodily orientation, and glance, because the participants employed their embodied action as an utterance in that their interlocutors interpreted and evaluated it and took a particular stance toward it. For example, Ben interpreted Farin non-verbal response to the teacher's question as evidence of her ignorance and positioned her as a not-knower (see Segment 2). Thus, in creating transcripts, we followed Green and Wallat (1981) to parse each transcript of the events into message units as a smallest unit boundary of meaning through contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1992).

### 3.3 Analytical procedures

Informed by the micro-ethnographic approach to discourse analysis (Bloome et al, 2005), this paper describes interactional language use across time. The events below that occurred in April and May were chosen because they constituted a thematically-linked case where 1) the focal group students worked to accomplish academic tasks in a similar way, 2) Farin's possible learning challenges become the focus of attention in the group interaction, and 3) the participants position Farin in a way as her disabilities are made visible to others at the moments.

### 3.4 Focal moments

As the lead author was documenting the focal group and specifically Farin, various interactions between her, other students, and the teacher became salient in that they were viewed as potentially problematic to Farin's learning. This then prompted a playback session with the teacher on March 17 to explore what was happening with Farin more closely. The lead author had identified a video section of interest from February 26, 2016 for the teacher to review in a playback session. In this video, the teacher stood near Farin and two other Spanish-speaking students (Ben & Jon) to explain, using Spanish and English, the notion of genotypes and phenotypes and their relationship to probabilities. At the beginning of the playback session, the teacher, reading Farin's eye gaze and body posture, commented "I think she's not

following along, she's totally lost" and "she got lost two steps back." The teacher then offered several theories for this 1) that he had done a poor job scaffolding the information for Farin, 2) Farin may lack certain educational or cultural knowledge such as the notion of "probability" while flipping a coin, or 3) Farin had some cognitive learning difficulty. Critically, the teacher noted that this learning difficulty issue had been discussed with other teachers and that they were considering initiating the process to have Farin assessed for special services. This playback session was a focal moment that drew our attention to what are the referential object or target which the evaluation the teacher and the group students do is directed to; how these students position themselves and their peers, especially Farin, about the object of evaluation; and how they respond to the stances their peers take.

We believe it is in and through interactions that people identify themselves and others in particular social contexts. In Farin's identity construction, such epistemic positioning along with the evaluation of her learning will be likely to play significant roles. Across the classroom interaction within and beyond Farin's group interaction, Farin's silence or lack of verbal interaction was topicalized as an object of evaluation. Oftentimes, people involved in the interaction shifted their topic to talk about from something else to Farin's silence and shared their evaluative stance toward it. This often led to the marginalization of Farin. Thus, we do not focus on whether such evaluation of Farin's participation was correct or not. Instead, we intend to focus on when such evaluation was made, in what ways it was made, and how people made use of this evaluation for their relationship.

Therefore, in reporting our analysis of stance-taking that occurred in the classroom interactions, we focused on illustrating 1) how Farin's participation in class activities through her use of language and semiotic resources was assessed by the teacher and 2) how this evaluative stance was taken up and used by her group members to position her regressively despite her own agentive moves to assert a positive social identity.

## **4 Findings**

Findings showed that Farin's speech, especially silence and lack of verbal interaction, was interpreted as indicating that she was not competent enough to participate in the classroom activities, although it was not true all the time. This way of framing her participation even further complicated her by linking it to her ethical identity. Thus, the negative evaluation on Farin's participation was accumulated over time, which had marginalized her in turn. In this section, we illustrated how group members' evaluative stance toward Farin's participation had been developed over time.

### **4.1 Farin's perceived lack of linguistic competence as not-knowing**

The following event was the first after the group was re-organized when Farin's speech became an object of evaluation. This event was part of a teacher-led conversation about the geologic time scale that had been introduced by a BrainPOP video including a character named Mobi. After watching the video, the teacher asked the whole class a question about the video, and students responded. When Alman's answer was picked up, the teacher shifted his attention to Farin and asked her to repeat Alman's answer. As the conversation unfolded, the teacher's evaluation of her repeating Alman's answer based on particular features of her utterance was shared with the classroom community. This shifted their focus to Farin's ability to hear and speak what her peer says in English in the interaction, which made visible her disability to repeat the words in English.

## Segment 1: Teacher -led discussion from April 13, 2016

T=Teacher, A=Alman, F=Farin, N=Nancy, Ss=Other students

- 1 T this is gonna very very  
 2 how's possible Mobi was in the very very old cave painting  
 3 A Mobi visit long time ago  
 4 T okay good Alman can you  
 5 ((looking at)) Farin did you hear about this?  
 6 F ((nodding))  
 7 T yes?  
 8 what did he say?  
 9 Ss ((laughing))  
 10 can you repeat what Alman said?  
 11 F ((weak voice)) mobi \*\*\*\*\*=  
 12 T =Alman can you repeat?  
 13 Ss ((laughing))  
 14 A Mobi visit long time ago  
 15 T can you repeat what he said Farin?  
 16 Ss ((laughing))  
 17 F ((smiling with weak voice)) mobi \*\*\*\*\*=  
 18 T =can you say that again Alman?  
 19 make sure you listen  
 20 A \*\*\*\*\*  
 21 F \*\*\*\*\* long time again  
 22 ((people are laughing))  
 23 N I heard  
 24 T Yeah

In segment 1, Alman, a student sitting in the right front, answered the question, followed by the teacher's affirmation. Then, the teacher shifted his attention from the video to Farin's engagement in the classroom conversation by checking Farin's attention to Alman's answer. Farin's tentative answer is ultimately not heard or validated by the teacher, who redirects back to Alman. This act causes other students to laugh although another Somali student, Nancy, asserts that she heard Farin. This event shows the teacher's stance towards Farin's. The teacher's evaluative stance presupposed that the students in the class should be able to hear and say what they hear in English in audible manner to successfully participate in class activities and indicated that Farin was not proficient enough to participate in the class. The teacher's interpretation of Farin's weak voice as an indication of her lack of linguistic competence in answering was also found in other events later. These often lead to asking Farin to repeat pronouncing vocabularies. These evaluations may be correct because Farin admitted her difficulties in both contents and English, especially in the biology classroom (1st interview with Farin, March 16, 2016). However, these interactions produced social consequences in the classroom, particularly regarding her social identities. The following excerpt from another interview with the teacher (May 9, 2016) illustrates his consistent evaluation of Farin's silence as ignorance. In this interview, the teacher perceived her lack of linguistic competence as contributing to her failure of accessing content knowledge.

Farin, she really had no business touching that type of work. Unfortunately, the content I want to teach isn't in the language of a third grader always, and so there are some students that can touch that type of material, she can't, just I mean, I mean, that point, I just hope she's gonna be able to work with somebody's who's gonna kinda be at that level that's gonna be comprehensible to her, cause there's no comprehensible input in that book for her, unfortunately,

The teacher considered Farin's lack of verbal interaction as evidence of her lack of linguistic competence, which is further considered hindrance to learning knowledge. Later in the class, her group members interpreted her lack of verbal interaction in her response as evidence of not-knowing.

Segment 2: Teacher and student interactions from May 9, 2016

T=Teacher, F=Farin, B=Ben, Ss=Other students

- 1 T this is principal of parentibility
- 2 we talked about some traits in your family
- 3 like I remember mentioning
- 4 Farin she's very tall
- 5 I even met her father
- 6 he's also very tall
- 7 and do you have any brothers
- 8 you have any brothers and sisters that is pretty tall?
- 9 F ((shaking her head a few times and then changing to nod her head))
- 10 B she don't know ((turning to another group))
- 11 Ss ((laughing))
- 12 F I know how ((turning around to Ben and saying))
- 13 B ((moving his upper body to the back))
- 14 F ((resting her head on her hand))
- 15 T those are the traits that are part of each family
- 16 F ((turning around again to Ben))
- 17 you don't know how your sister is
- 18 B uh?
- 19 F you don't know your sister
- 20 B so why why you just be quiet?
- 21 right?
- 22 why you just be quiet?
- 23 F some are tall some are short

Here, the teacher started the discussion by giving an example from Farin's family. When he asked Farin about her family and Farin answered by shaking and nodding his head, Ben turned to another group and said, "she don't know" and the students sitting near Farin laughed. That is, Ben framed Farin's response as lack of verbal interaction rather than a non-verbal response and considered this as an indication of not-knowing, although it was not. This framing of her utterance as lack of verbal interaction made invisible her communicative competence to others and position Farin as not-knowing.



Although she resisted this identification briefly by asserting to Ben that everybody knows about their own family and responding, “some are tall, some are short,” Ben’s evaluation of her competence was already public and has social consequence.

#### 4.2 Farin perceived as not-knowing and uncollaborative

On May 2, students were asked to solve the textbook problems together as a group. Ben and Ken were collaborating on a question 4 but found difficulty discovering the correct answer. During this interaction, Farin was working independently on questions 2 and 3, which were about terminologies they learned in the chapter. In the previous conversation, Farin asked Ken for help on question 2, and Ken told her to look at a certain page as a reference. Given that she took some time to answer the questions, Farin seemed not to make much progress. At that time, Ben asked Farin to share her thoughts on the problem.

Segment 3: Student interactions from May 2, 2016

F=Farin, B=Ben, K=Ken

- 1 B ((turning his gaze from Ken to Farin)) so  
 2 what do you think?  
 3 F ((turning her gaze away from Ben and blowing a bubble with her gum without responding))  
 4 K ((bending his head back)) what do you think Farin?  
 5 F ((turning her gaze to Ken and back to her book at p. 410 without response))  
 6 K ((quickly sitting up and orienting toward Farin)) come on  
 7 [this is what we need to finish  
 8 B ((turning his gaze from what Farin is doing to Ken with smile))  
 [she don’t know  
 9 ((turning back to Farin)) right?  
 10 F ((underlining her textbook and smiles)) I don’t know

In lines 1-2, Ben attempted to involve Farin in the talk he and Ken had established by asking, “so what do you think” with his body oriented toward her. However, in this utterance, the object of the predicate, think, pointed to was omitted, and Ken repeated this utterance without giving the information in line 3. Although the object was referred to multiple times in this transcript, it was not provided to Farin. These sequential utterances showed that both Ken and Ben presupposed that Farin should know what questions they were talking about.

In lines 1-3, although Ben and Ken asked for Farin’s opinion, Farin ignored their request for her support, even blowing a bubble with her gum and looking away, causing them to insist that she work with them. When she continued ignoring them, Ken insisted on her response with “come on,” and “this is what we need to finish.” Ken’s use of “come on” with “we need to” indicated that he evaluated her response as inappropriate because she was obligated to contribute to completing the task as a group member. Ken’s evaluation of Farin’s response and positioning of her was reinforced by Ben’s response. At line 8, Ben interpreted her silence as an indication of her not knowing (“she don’t know”). Farin then adopted this response at line 10. This epistemic stance toward her response with silence echoed the way the teacher often understood and dealt with her silence. More importantly, this epistemic positioning is used for marginalizing Farin. Ben and Ken interrogated the intention of her actions as part of her way of participation in the group and thus positioned her as uncollaborative group member. Segment 4 extends this frame.

## Segment 4: Student interactions from May 2, 2016

- 1 K [why do you don't know  
 2 B ((pointing at her textbook at p. 410))  
 [why why you read that one?  
 3 F ((turning her gaze to Ben without response))  
 4 B ((pointing at Ken's textbook and giggles)) she read that one  
 5 F ((making a face at Ben))  
 6 K ((Ken and Ben are giggling))  
 7 B ((tapping on Q4 on Ken's textbook)) THAT one  
 8 F ((looking at Ben))  
 9 K why you are mad?  
 10 B ((looking at Farin and tapping on the textbook with his pen)) <NUMBER FOUR>  
 11 B ((tapping on the textbook with each word in a rhythm)) <WHAT DO YOU THINK>  
 12 F ((shaking her head))  
 13 B ((tapping on the book)) go get answer  
 14 F ((looking unkindly at Ben)) okay  
 15 you know all the thing do you want?  
 16 ((shifting her gaze to her textbook))  
 17 B (Ben and Ken are giggling)  
 18 K (looking at his textbook and shaking his head)  
 19 F this is \*\*\*\*\*, I think so you know  
 20 B (tapping on the textbook) So  
 21 we need to do it in group man  
 22 so you need to collaborate  
 23 (turning to look at Ken) right?  
 24 K (turning to look at Ben) uh huh

In lines 2-7, Ben connected her admitted epistemic stance toward the question as not knowing to her attitudinal stance toward the group work as uncollaborative. Ben problematized Farin's engagement in the question she was working on (line 2) by placing Farin at the stance subject position of the action, "read that one" (line 2) and paralleling "that one" (lines 4 and 7). In doing so, Ben problematized not only the fact that she did not the answer but also the fact that she was engaging in a different question than the question Ken and he were working on. Then, Ben justified his mocking behaviors toward her as he framed her participation in what "we need to do" as a "group" (line 21) as uncollaborative.

This segment shows how stance attribution made by Ben and Ken marginalized Farin. As Ben shifted the object of his evaluation from Farin's knowledge to her intention, Ben and Ken positioned Farin as not only non-knowing but as uncollaborative. This positioning of her was reinforced in the following event, when Farin's subjectivity of the action was centered as a topic of conversation and discussed. A few minutes later, Holly, another student from Guinea, the youngest student in the class but a table leader, passed through the room and was briefly blocked by Farin's chair, which prompted them to have a conversation.

## Segment 5: Student interactions from May 2, 2016

F=Farin, B=Ben, K=Ken, H=Holly

- 1 F oh Holly
- 2 H ((standing next to Farin and looking at her notebook)) you finish?
- 3 F ((looking up at Holly)) hmm
- 4 H you know where you are at?
- 5 F ((continues looking at Holly))
- 6 H you started it
- 7 F ((moving gaze down to notebook))
- 8 H it isn't this stuff what is it?
- 9 F ((looking at notebook))
- 10 H Mr. say Mr. say don't write question.
- 11 K ((shifting his gaze from his notebook to Holly))
- 12 H just answer
- 13 K ((shifting his gaze to Holly again)) she write a question?
- 14 B ((stop using his cellphone and turns his gaze to Farin))
- 15 H ((looking at Ken)) no no question answer
- 16 K ((finger-pointing at Farin while looking at Holly)) did she write a question?
- 17 H ((smiling))  
[yes she write it
- 18 B [yeah
- 19 K ((raising his right hand up)) SHE
- 20 H if you do that you will all your paper you will finish for this one
- 21 this one
- 22 K ((writing in his notebook)) she doesn't wanna work in a group that's why
- 23 F ((turning to look at Ken and popping bubble gum))
- 24 don't miss
- 25 K ((having eye contact with Farin and immediately turning his gaze back to his notebook))
- 26 F ((turning her gaze from Ken to her notebook)) you know I don't liked it

In this segment, Holly initially offered some support to Farin based on her evaluation of the assignment Farin was doing, which attracted the attention of Ben and Ken. In lines 13 and 16, Ken interrupted the conversation between Holly and Farin by asking Holly a question twice, "Did she write a question?" In so doing, her subjectivity of the action is centered as a topic of conversation and discussed. During these lines, Ken repeated Ben's stance toward her actions and participation in the group, arguing that her notetaking of the questions was not a mistake but her intentional action that represented her unwillingness to collaborate with the group members. In line 20, Ken repeated Ben's positioning of Farin in Segment 4 as uncollaborative by putting Farin at the stance subject of the predicate, "doesn't wanna work in a group" and linked it to her notetaking. Both Ken and Ben attempted to link her learning difficulties due to her English language to her participation in the group and ultimately social identities. In this segment, Farin was not considered as an addressee or hearer when she was called as "she" rather than "you" by Ken. Thus, Farin was positioned more as an object in the talk, not a participant despite

their previously stated desire to collaborate with her.

These sequential interactions on May 2 show that her silence that triggered Ben and Ken to position her as not knowing was also used to investigate her intention and position her as an unwilling participant. Farin struggled not only with doing and participating in the class but also with her group members' positioning of her as a group member who is not willing to participate in the group work.

### 4.3 Farin perceived as not-knowing and copying

The group members continuously viewed Farin's silence as evidence of her ignorance. This evaluation and positioning led to other identifications of Farin, which marginalized her further. The following event from May 9 demonstrates how Farin's silence or lack of verbal interaction is viewed and used by her group members to position her. This event shows how even the teacher's efforts to support Farin were overshadowed by the student interactions.

Segment 6: Teacher and student interactions from May 9, 2016

- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| 1  | T   | ((coming to the right side of Farin)) so how old was he?                                       |
| 2  | F   | how? ((smiling)) I don't know  |
| 3  | T   | what year was he born?   |
| 4  | F   | ((looking at her textbook for the answer to his question))                                     |
| 5  | B   | ((putting his hand on his notebook to cover his notebook and observing the teacher and Farin)) |
| 6  | T   | did you find out the information?  |
| 7  | F   | I don't know   |
| 8  | T   | how did you get this answer?   |
| 9  | F   | I think ((looking at Ben and back to the teacher while smiling))                               |
| 10 | T&F | ((laughing))   |
| 11 | F   | ((takes a calculator from Ken))  |
| 12 | T   | look   |
| 13 |     | there are a few dates listed on this page  |
| 14 | B   | ((turning to Ken and saying softly with smiling)) she just copy right                          |

In this segment during the warm-up activity, Farin was working independently and the teacher came to check her progress. When she did not demonstrate competence on the question with the teacher, he helped her locate the information on the page. However, Ben asserted to Ken that this was "copying" at line 14. Ben put Farin at the stance subject position of the predicate, "just copy," indicates Ben's evaluation of Farin's participation in the classroom activity as inappropriate and his positioning of her as an unethical person who had copied other's intellectual effort.

As shown above across the group interactions in a classroom community, Farin was engaged and supported by the teacher multiple times, but her responses were interpreted as, at a minimum, not-knowing, and more seriously provoke laughter and other student behavior that positioned her as uncollaborative and unethical. It is important to note that across events, Ben and Ken's positioning of Farin was accumulative and became thickened, moving from a not-knower to a non-collaborator and a cheater. Moreover, when she resisted, employing a number of strategies including being purposefully silent or working independently, popping her bubble gum in their direction, and directly challenging their assertions, these were read as behaviors unbecoming of a knowledgeable and participating group member.

## 5 Discussion

Following Jaffe's perspective (2009a) that "stances are also acquired, attributed, and accumulated through individuals' sequences of movement through participant roles" (p. 20), we examined how Farin was positioned and responded to the peer's positioning of her to trace her identity construction. The sequences of events and interactions in this present study underline some of the central challenges with the education of adolescent newcomers in superdiverse contexts and the importance of attending to stance-taking in the analysis of classroom events and outcomes (Du Bois, 2007). Superdiversity's mobility, complexity, and unpredictability manifest in the ad hoc decisions the teacher had to make in the adolescent newcomer program context to compose Farin's group. At the outset, this may not be problematic in that Ben and Ken could have built on the teacher's confidence in them as ad hoc group leaders to take up stances as supportive team members; however, over the classroom interactions, the teacher's momentary evaluation of Farin's speech creates the opportunity for a stance of incompetence to be taken up by Ben and Ken, which thickens and evolves regressively over time. Specifically, when she acknowledged the positioning of her as not knowing, her silence was also considered as the evidence of a stance of not-participating and cheating. Although this interpretation was not simply accepted by Farin but rather resisted in various ways, her actions and reactions to the group members' positioning of her were used as resources to marginalize her further and judge her cognitive ability and willingness to collaborate as lacking. That is, such evaluation of her silence in varied ways directly and indirectly contributed to positioning Farin in negative ways.

Farin's social identities as a not-knower and non-collaborator were invoked as she participated in the class activities and interacted with her group members, Ben and Ken. As Ben or Ken took up a position, they assigned or proposed particular positions of Farin. Thus, as performing acts, stances Ben and Ken took automatically involved Farin in constructing their social relationships and in doing so, they dominated the group task and marginalized her from the group, reinforcing the ideological relations between silence and its social meanings. This aligns with Jaffe's (2009a) argument that "stance attributions are tools of control and ideological domination" (p. 8).

Although it is clear that the stances taken towards Farin had thickened over time, thankfully the teacher's pedagogy included the regular changing and mixing of groups, allowing for different stances to emerge and develop throughout the year in new interactional frames. In this case, the next grouping moved the students into languaculturally homogeneous groups for the "Bilingual Biomes" end-of-year project, which afforded Farin more opportunities to work with similar peers and to be seen as a knowledgeable group member. Thus, this article is not arguing that extreme harm was done to Farin but rather makes a detailed exposition of the role of stance in interactions, particularly in superdiverse social contexts.

It is important to note whose stances are taken up by whom and what would be the consequences of the stance-taking (Du Bois, 2007; Goodwin, 2007; Kiesanen, 2007). In this study, the teacher's stances toward relationships between specific semiotic forms and its meanings and social positions were shared with the class community through his repetitive evaluation of Farin's response and participation and positioning of her based on the evaluation. Ben and Ken took the shared teacher's stance toward Farin's language use and employed it in constructing their relationships and defining collaboration. That is, as Jaffe (2009b) illustrates, teacher's evaluation is consequential for defining students' learner identities. That is often circulated and taken up by students, bringing about significant consequences in the way students build relations among themselves. As shown, Ben and Ken saw Farin's utterances not aligned with what the teacher considered as legitimate responses. Along with this, the teacher assigned Ben and Ken a position as group leaders for group tasks. This allowed Ben and Ken to evaluate Farin's linguistic performance and position her based on their evaluation, accumulatively marginalizing Farin over time.

This study has two key implications, particularly in the field of education generally and TESOL

specifically. First, identities and learning in classrooms are contextual, intertwined with stance-taking, and evolve or thicken over time. In this context, when the teacher created the groups and thereby forced Farin to work with Ben and Ken, her identity as a non-collaborator began to be constructed. Despite the teacher's complex and contextual understanding of Farin and various moves to support her in the class, his interactions are ultimately used as resources by the group members to position her negatively. Thus, the teacher's intended pedagogy of collaboration through languaculturally heterogeneous groups simultaneously created opportunities for learning but also exposed asymmetric power relationships among the group members that resulted in ascribing identities to Farin as a not-knower, non-collaborator, and cheater, which made her further disengage to work with her group members. In the final interview with her on June 2, 2016, Farin said that she did not want to ask others for help, especially her group members because they made fun of her.

Second, identities are not fixed or given, but people become recognized and identified as particular beings as they build on stances each other takes. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that through the repetitive social processes, "the interactional identities produced via stance taking accrue into more enduring identities like gender, as well as forming ideologies of gender-appropriate interactional practice" (p. 596). The students took stances toward participation in the group work and established a participation structure through building on each other's stances. Unfortunately, Farin's behavior was constructed as inappropriate, which had negative implications for her group belonging and academic development.

These implications raise key pedagogical questions about what shifts in classroom contexts or participation structures could be made to mitigate or improve the experience of Farin, which is certainly not an isolated case, in TESOL-oriented spaces.

## 6 Conclusion

This microanalysis of routine classroom events in a Central Ohio adolescent newcomer program led by an experienced, multilingual teacher shows that the temporary and intentional groupings of students create layered and complex pedagogical contexts and experiences. On the other hand, unanticipated changes in these groups in addition to micro-level moves to silence or impose deficit identities on students despite their agentive reactions or resistance can have broad impacts on students' investment in the learning context. Thus, educators wrestling with the various challenges and possibilities of superdiversity must develop and implement policies and practices to ensure equitable educations for all, particularly newcomers. This is particularly important for the TESOL field in that engagement with an English-learning environment is an initial and critical experience in the U.S. and a number of other regions globally. As a result, the careful work of TESOL educators to attend to the specifics of classroom instruction and observe the students' stance-taking moves is critical to ensuring that all students are respected and therefore invested in these learning arrangements. Farin's case may be cautionary but also reveals opportunities for engagement and reflective learning that can inform educators working with similar students and situations globally.

## Note Transcript Conventions

- '[ ' indicates simultaneous talk by two speakers, with one utterance represented on top of the other and the moment of overlap marked by left brackets
- '=' interruption or next utterance following immediately, or continuous talk represented on separate lines because of need to represent overlapping comment on intervening line
- '?' rising intonation
- '((...))' nonverbal behaviors

CAPS segment louder than surrounding talk  
 '< >' the pace has slowed down  
 \*\*\*\*\* indecipherable

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