

## The Construction of A Queer Community in NS-NNS Talk

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### Abstract

This study seeks to understand how queer language learners negotiate their sexual identities in the second language as they enter a target community with NSs. I examine the identity construction in talk by two gay Thai English language learners and two native English-speaking gay Asian Americans. Informed by Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of community of practice, I explore how each participant created, displayed, and negotiated their identity in this community. Informed by membership category analysis (MCA) in conjunction with conversational analysis (CA), I show that the participants' individual identities play a central role in the type of language that they use and acquire within the context of a broader social identity.

### Identity And Cultural Capital

Studies in second language acquisition have shown that identity is an important aspect in language learning, yet researchers have not yet been able to conceptualize comprehensively the relationship between the language learner and their social world (Norton, 1995, 2010). The investigation of the relations between race, gender, and sexual orientation and their impact on language learning has gained more attention in recent years (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 414). Theorists such as Norton (1995) gave rise to a reformed concept of social identity, namely, the idea that speakers and their social relationships are inseparable (p. 11). Further, an individual's identity is mediated by the reactions of others to that individual's social and cultural position, which, in turn, can influence that individual's motivation to learn in ways that are not predictable (Ricento, 2005, p. 899).

Norton (2000) stated that if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their "cultural capital" (p.10). Cultural capital has been described as "the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms" (Norton, 2000, p. 10). For example, for a gay Thai male staying in the US with the goal of seeking employ-

ment and residency, the cultural capital that he needs is the knowledge, skills, and language necessary to function as a competent member of certain professional and social groups in this country. Investment is thus a key process for language learning. Through the concept of investment, we can "make a meaningful connection between a learner's desire and the commitment to learn a language, and the language practices of the classroom or community" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 415). Thus, a learner whose identity does not fit within the constructs of a particular community or classroom may not be fully engaging and learning within the particular group. In other words, a learner may not be invested in gaining from a particular community because the affiliated is unfulfilling to their identity. In this paper, I aim to examine how two learners invest in a second language and position themselves in a new community of practice in order to gain the desired cultural capital. In the next section, I review the notion of communities of practice and its implications for second language learning.

### Communities of Practice

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning is a process of participation in a "community of practice." These communities



of practice are everywhere and we are involved in a number of them: home, work, school, friend circles, etc. In some groups we are core members, in some we resist membership, and in others we are marginalized. Some communities of practice are quite formal (e.g. work and school) while others are informal (e.g., home, family, and friendships). What bring together a group of people in a community of practice are mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998, pp. 73-85). Mutual engagement involves a set of relationships over time and communities develop around things that matter to them (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98). When members of communities of practice interact, they create an enterprise, or shared goals together. Lastly, members of a community share resources: routines, tools, concepts, vocabulary, and symbols (p. 83). Members of a community of practice thus are social beings with shared experiences and shared identities – identities that are not pre-given but are constructed, renewed, and developed in talk and social practices (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 27).

Regarding learning, Lave and Wenger found in their studies that initially newcomers join the community of oldtimers and learn at the periphery. As their competency builds, they move towards the “center” of that particular community. In order to gain more access in a community of practice, the newcomer needs to learn to talk, act, and improvise in ways that make sense in the community. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world (p. 49). What this means is that learning in a community of practice involves changing one’s identity from a newcomer to an old-timer.

Along the same lines, King (2008) recognized that identity is a nexus of multi-memberships and transformative in language learning (p. 235). King described identity as changing in series, redefinitions, and renegotiations, which is consistent with the concept of communities of practice (p. 235).

Learning is then an investment in something important to whom the participant is or has become (e.g. a queer community, family, academics). This view of learning is consistent with the notion of investment developed by Norton (1995).

Wenger (1998) further explained that with regards to social participation, there are rules for entry (p. 100). Individuals gain entry into a community of practice first by means of legitimate peripheral participation, achieved through exposure to “mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiation of the enterprise, and to their repertoire in use” (p. 100). In other words, a newcomer may take a passive role at first as s/he learns how to participate adequately and appropriately within a community of practice. It is important to note that the participants may not be legitimized by other members, or they may choose not to participate as a reflective form of resistance.

Taking Lave and Wenger’s view, second language learning is conducted through observation and participation within target communities of practice. The notion of communities of practice is relevant to research on second language acquisition as it attempts to answer *why* people acquire language. In Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory, it is the learner’s identity and the society in which they participate that give rise to learning faster or slower, more accurately or target-like in certain aspects of language. In this study, I attempt to examine two gay Thai men’s language learning in the context of their identity negotiation in a community of practice with two gay Asian American men. The two Asian Americans are considered oldtimers while the two Thai learners would be the newcomers. This case study thus aims to contribute to the larger discussion about the relationship between social identities and language learning.

Identity can be constructed in many ways in conversations; however, in this paper I will be examining how identity is created and negotiated through the practices of topic

management. The next section will review these practices.

### Identity Construction in Topic Management

Topics are brought up in discourse through topic proffers. Schegloff (2007) described a topic proffer as follows:

With a topic proffer a speaker *proposes* a particular topic (as compared to a solicitation, in which the speaker invites the *recipient* to propose a topic), but does not actively launch or further develop the proposed topic (as in a unilateral topic initiation). By “proffering” the topic, the speaker makes it available to recipient(s) to embrace or reject, to “buy into” or decline. (p. 180-181)

According to Schegloff, “topic proffers may concern something which is specifically, differentially, or even exclusively within the recipient’s experience or on which their view has special weight or authority” (p. 173). The recipient of the proffer then carries the burden of talking in the projected topic-talking sequence (Schegloff, 1995, p. 173). This in turn, constructs the identities of both the speaker and recipient, depending on what occurs after proffers are made in discourse. Schegloff (1996) described a topic proffer sequence as when *two* tries or proffers are put forward. Each proffer can then be “taken up and embraced or declined by its recipient” (p. 58). When a recipient accepts a proffer it is done as a preferred response (i.e. no delay of its turn or *in* its turn, with no qualifications, accounts, etc., and as more than a minimal response) (p. 58). On the other hand, declining a topic is often done as a dispreferred response, which can be minimal or delayed. Topic proffers are built to initiate extended talk on a given topic; therefore, a minimal response to a topic proffer is dispreferred. Thus, even a turn where the response seems to align in agreement to discuss the topic can be a minimal turn, which is interpreted as not taking up the proffer.

Most importantly, taking up a proffered topic involved *claiming* access to the topic, and a decline would then deny access. It is important to note that a rejection of access to information may not necessarily lead to a dispreferred response, as the recipient can provide an expanded response with accounts that are on the topic. How topics are managed in discourse may reveal the speaker’s and recipient’s identities, and in this paper, I will examine how identities are negotiated in talk largely through the practices of topic proffers.

### Methodology

#### *Participants*

For the purposes of this research, I chose to video record, transcribe, and analyze a conversation between two NSs (NSs) and two NNSs (NNSs) of English. Zack and Jeffrey (pseudonyms) are two non-native English speakers and self-identified gay men in the United States. Jeffrey has been in the United States for roughly three years and Zack for about one year. Both are originally from Thailand: Zack from Bangkok and Jeffrey from Chiang Mai. They are enrolled in language schools located in Los Angeles while working at a Thai restaurant. At the time of the data collection, Zack and Jeffrey came to Honolulu on an extended vacation for sightseeing while exploring business opportunities.

The NSs, Larry<sup>1</sup> and Chad (pseudonyms) lived in Honolulu and had met Zack and Jeffrey through a mutual friend. Larry and Chad are both gay Asian Americans. It is presumed then that Larry and Chad are at the center of this specific community of practice as they had been participating in the gay community for a number of years before the data collection. Through Larry and Chad, Zack and Jeffrey gained access to the gay Asian and broader gay community within Honolulu.

Zack and Jeffrey are an interesting case for research on second language learning, as they are new members of the broader *gay*

*Asian American* community, specifically in Hawaii and furthermore the United States overall. Larry and Chad are the experienced members of this community. Informed by Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory and Norton's (1995) emphasis on the learning context in language acquisition rather than paying exclusive attention to the mastery of language forms, I will examine the contextual factors, specifically, the learner's social identity and their participation in a community of practice that might have contributed to their language learning.

### *Data Collection*

The data consist of a dinner conversation among the four participants in Larry's apartment before visiting a local nightclub. Larry had prepared the meal before the arrival of the participants. A few days prior to the dinner date, I obtained the other participants' agreement to be recorded during the dinner for research use. The purpose of the study was mentioned to the other participants as a project about language learning to be used in research. On the dinner date, initially while the camera was recording, none of the participants, besides Larry, was aware of a camera recording. It was not until roughly in the middle of the recording that all the participants were informed that there was a camera recording them. Larry re-informed the participants of the purpose of the research which was discussed with them a few days earlier, and no objections were made. At one point in the conversation, Larry invited the participants to engage in "gay talk." Although Larry did encourage gay talk, the participants behaved as they might in front of a camera and when they are solicited to have a gay conversation. The recorded data on the camera was not scripted, reproduced, or practiced beforehand. More importantly, according to Have (2007) "whether some piece of talk can be treated as 'natural' or not depends not only on its setting, but also on the way it is being analyzed" (p. 69). For the purposes of this study, the analysis is based on how the participants negotiate and situate

their identities when prompted to have "gay talk."

### *Analytical Procedure*

To analyze the data I used membership category analysis (MCA) in conjunction with conversation analysis (CA), a method to analyze talk-in-interaction through the collection and transcription of audio-visual recordings of conversation, to investigate identity construction. I am interested in the ways each member (both the NSs and the NNSs) situated their identity construction(s) in these specific social practices under the notion that Larry and Chad are *active members* in this community of practice while Zack and Jeffrey are newly joining members. The process of identity construction takes place continually as members participate within this group. In order to understand how the members positioned themselves through the construction of their messages, I used Sacks, Jefferson, and Schegloff's (1972) conversation analysis informed by membership categorization analysis (MCA) (e.g., Benwell & Stokoe, 2005) and Goffman's (1981) notion of participation frameworks, which is compatible with the notion of identity construction and performance (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999). MCA is a branch of conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, which pays close attention to commonsense knowledge that speakers invoke during their everyday conversation. Under this notion, speakers are *doing* their identities through talk (doing age, doing gender, doing sexuality, etc.). As Goffman (1981) pointed out, the production of an utterance immediately projects a footing for the participants and possibly a broader audience, creating their participation framework as a whole. Following the work of the above authors, the analysis in this paper focuses on identity construction and positioning in talk.

### **Data Analysis**

In the recorded conversation, the NNSs sometimes failed to participate in talk that had

currency in the gay community, and sometimes they were able to join in as active members. In the analysis below, I will first examine their participation and positioning when the participants were looking for topics with currency in the gay community, then I will examine how the NNSs failed to uptake topics with currency that were introduced in the conversation, and finally I describe how they actively participated in talk that had currency in the gay community.

### *Finding Topics with Currency in the Gay Community*

The first set of data I explore is about how the NNSs participate in the gay community of

#### Excerpt 1. “Having a Gay Conversation”

129 L: Jeffrey, Larry, and Chad having a conversation (2.0) BUT,  
 130 >I’m trying to make this conversation< <a ↑gay conversation>  
 131 (3.0)((Chad brings his plate to chair and sits down))  
 132 J: Ga:y topic? ((nodding his head))  
 133 L: Ye::a. something Ga:[y  
 134 Z: [Like what?  
 135 C: >I SAID I’m on diet< that’s >kinda like< linguistic’ly gay  
 136 L: °Is it? °  
 137 C: Yea °you could believe that°  
 138 (2.0)  
 139 L: °me too uh (1.0) I wouldn’t eat all that much carb because°-  
 140 C: because wh[at?  
 141 Z: [How it taste?  
 142 L: It’s all carbs  
 143 Z: Is good?  
 144 C: It’s good but ((points to Larry)) I think the chili pepper  
 145 is a bit weird

In line 130, Larry proffers the topic “gay talk” and the recipients now can take initiative to talk about it, avoid it, or decline the invite. After the pause following Larry’s topic proffer, the participants do not decline the proffer; rather, each chimes in with preferred, but minimal responses. In line 132, Jeffrey replies with “gay topic?” while nodding his head and smiling, thus indicating his acceptance of the proffer. In line 134 Zack also replies with “like what?” which shows he is also compliant to the topic, however, he is unsure of what within gay topics to discuss. This shows that at least he needs more clarity and direction on the topic. The NNSs initial responses show

practice introduced by Chad and Larry. In the next excerpt, Larry brings up the need to make this conversation “gay,” right after notifying the participants that they are being recorded for research purposes, and joking about uploading the video recording to *YouTube*. What this means is that the group of men is given the task to talk about topics that have currency within their gay community. The NSs, Chad and Larry, are able to generate topics first and the NNSs agree but unsuccessfully add to the topic, abruptly shifting topics to the food.

their alignment with the topic as well as their lack of knowledge repertoire to develop the topic further.

Chad then produces a full response to the topic proffer in line 135 with “I said I’m on a diet that’s kinda linguistically gay.” With this turn, Chad, the other NS of English, simultaneously creates the gay identities for himself and Larry. He marks dieting as a gay topic and states that he himself is dieting. This alludes to his queer identity. He is also recognizing the identity of Larry as a student of linguistics and a gay man as he seeks approval from Larry. In line 139, Larry furthers the topic by agreeing with Chad, thus

aligning with the notion that dieting is a gay topic. Interestingly, when Chad asks Larry to further explain why he does not want to eat carbs in line 140, Larry replies in line 141 with “it’s all carbs,” which evades the question and does not add any further information. Larry could have explicitly said because it would make him fat. However, he chooses to avoid the word “fat.” This may reveal Larry’s own beliefs about what his sexual identity entails: a choice to avoid being fat. Thus, Larry and Chad both construct a community in which to be gay means to care about your image and physical appearance through dieting.

While Larry’s sensitivity to the topic of diet and Chad’s emphasis that dieting has some relationship with gay identities would suggest that this idea is true in their community of practice of gay men, this idea of dieting was not explicitly important to the NNSs Zack and Jeffrey. This is seen in Jeffrey’s lack of uptake on the topic and Zack’s abrupt topic shift in line 140 by asking about the taste of the food they are eating without a closing response or pivot to close the dieting topic. Zack’s topic shift to something he can talk about (“Pad Thai” is a dish from his country’s origin) may also mark his identity as a language learner and an individual from

Thailand rather than a gay identity at this moment. This excerpt has shown that the NNSs were unable to further expand on a gay topic introduced by the oldtimers in this moment. They were unable to participate actively in the community and the topic, even though they may have wanted to.

As the conversation continues, gay topics do begin to arise, and a community of practice is further constructed through conversational positioning by the participants. The following analysis attempts to describe how the oldtimers, Chad and Larry, actively construct this community and even repeatedly invite the newcomers to participate in this construction but the newcomers fail to participate in it.

### *Failure to Participate in Talk on Topics With Currency in the Gay Community*

#### Talking About ‘Hooking Up’ As Currency

Prior to this next excerpt, Zack and Jeffrey do not initially display a clear understanding of the phrase *hook up*, therefore they are unable to accept or decline proffers on a topic about their mutual friends, Jee and Woonie, effectively.

Excerpt 2: “Hooked up”

182 C: [Did they hook up? (.) At the apartment? (.) it’s a  
183 house? (.) In LA?  
184 Z: Yes. (.) Huh? ((looking at J))  
185 C: They do right? >they HOOKED UP?<  
186 Z: Hook up [wa? ((looking at J))  
187 J: [No I dunno  
188 C: you don’t know?  
189 J: I dunno  
190 Z: I dunno,  
191 C: How can you not know?  
192 J: I have my own room.  
193 C: Oh  
194 Z: Yea I have my own room. .hh

In Excerpt 2, Chad persistently pursues the topic on Jee and Woonie’s sexual relationship (lines 185, 188, 191), which implies that talk about sexual relationships has currency in the gay community. However, Zack and Jeffrey’s minimal participation in

this topic shows that they do not have this currency yet. In line 186, Zack says “Hook up wa?” and looks at Jeffrey. This indicates either that he does not know what is meant by *hook up* or that he was trying to repair his last statement in line 183. Jeffrey also declines the

topic proffer with a minimal response to reject access to the information (line 187). Despite Chad's second attempt at inviting talk from them (line 188), Chad and Zack continue to decline the invitation to talk about the topic (lines 189, 190). In short, they are unable to give the speaker, Chad, a newsworthy answer that has currency within the gay community in which Chad constructs. In other words, by claiming to not know whether Woonie and Jee have any sexual relations, they fail to participate in talk that is deemed to have currency in this community by the oldtimer, Chad.

In this case, Chad also constructs gay identity and practices for gay men. He constructs a notion that in a gay community, friends may have sexual relations without being identified as a monogamous or romantic pair. For Zack and Jeffrey, it appears the practice and topic has no currency and they were not entirely clear on the meaning of *hooking up*. It is also arguable that Zack and Jeffrey do not share the same idea or knowledge about what friendships may entail,

as the NSs do. In other words, for Zack and Jeffrey, there is a clear boundary between friends and sex, which is not crossed. While for Larry and Chad, the oldtimers, the boundaries may blur. It can also be argued that Zack and Jeffrey may have felt uncomfortable answering the question. However, even if this is the case, the data show that Zack and Jeffrey are unable to shift topics effectively. In the excerpt, all of Zack and Jeffrey's responses only confirm their roommate status with Jee and Woonie, and are not able to effectively engage or shift topics about *hooking up*.

#### Talking About 'One-Night Stands' As Currency

Zack and Jeffrey may be constructing their own sexual practices and that of their roommates as private matter by denying access to any information. In the next excerpt, Chad uses a topic proffering sequence to clarify his intentions in the conversation while initiating more topics that hold currency.

Excerpt 3: "Bring any boys home?"

223 C: [Does he bring any boys home?  
 224 Z: Who? Me? Jee? (.) No  
 225 J: No I never seen that  
 226 Z: Uh  
 227 C: Really? I thought he's a slut  
 228 (1.0)  
 229 L: [.hh  
 230 J: [.hh  
 231 C: No?  
 232 Z: hh I dunno .hh .H[H  
 233 L: [\$Has- do any of you guys bring any body home?]

In Excerpt 3, Chad tries to engage the NNSs in a topic about having one-night stands, a topic with currency in the gay community, at least as created by Chad and Larry. Very much like in the last excerpt, Chad tries to proffer the one-night stand topic about Jee, the friend. The NNSs give Chad no real newsworthy answer in lines 224 and 225. Chad makes a second attempt to proffer the topic in line 227; however, Jeffrey and Zack do not take the opportunity to further the talk on this topic during the silence in line

228. Chad makes a third attempt in line 231, and again, Zack denies access to information in line 232. The topic closes when, in line 233, Larry shifts the topic to the sexual practices of the two Thai men by asking "Do any of you guys bring any body home?"

When a recipient to a topic proffer does not have access to the information being asked about, he or she can still accept the topic proffer and contribute to topical talk by providing an extended account or speculation (Schegloff, 2007). In Jeffrey and Zack's case,

they either do not know the interactional practices to accept topic proffer with a lack of information about the topic, or do not have the understanding that talk about one-night stands has currency in the gay community.

In the next excerpt, one of the NNSs, Zack, seems to participate more actively in a topic that the oldtimers deem relevant in their community of practice. This, however, is the only instance in which a NNS participates actively in a topic with currency in the gay community as it is constructed by Chad and Larry.

*Active Participation in Talk on Topic With Currency in the Gay Community*

Talking About Sexual Preferences As Currency

In a heteronormative conversation or community, it might be seen as normal to assume opposite sexes can have interest in each other. When members are of all the same sex and same sexual orientation, there is no other way of finding out who has interest in whom but through identifying one's personal preference and type. Within the gay community, it is common to see gay men

specifying their types, their likes, and dislikes for sexual and romantic relationships. This common practice has produced a number of jargon terms specific to gay men such as the following: rice queen, potato queen, sticky rice, bear, bear chaser, S&M, leather, top, bottom, vers, masculine, feminine, etc. These terms or labels give an individual a specific identity and categorize him or her, whether positive or negative. For example, a *rice queen* is a white male who has a strong preference for Asian men. *Potato queens* are Asian men who like white men. *Sticky rice* then, refers to Asian men who only date Asian men. *Bears* are hairy men and *bear chasers* are non-hairy men who have a preference for hairy men. The usage and labeling of identities within GLBT communities are numerous and vast. Within gay sub-cultures, such as the gay Asian American sub-culture described here, there exist certain ideas and vocabulary about preferences, and talk about these preferences is quite common.

In the next excerpt, the men engage in a conversation revealing what type of men they find physically attractive. Here, one of the NNSs, Zack, is more successful at participating in the conversation.

Excerpt 4: Chinese is not cute

370 C: ((looked at Z and then looks at L again)) I don't think Chinese is cute  
371 L: hh Chinese Malaysians are cu[:te  
372 C: [oh really are they? I don't think Chinese is [cute at all  
373 Z: [ but- but that guy is Chi:nese  
374 C: yea Chinese is not cute  
375 J: ((says something in Thai..)) (ko nai wa)  
376 Z: but (1.0) but last time saw him  
377 like (.)he is uh (.) white skin (.) maybe good  
378 looking cause (.) I (.) was drunk that time hh  
379 (1.0)  
380 C: Yea that means he's not good looking  
381 ((shaking head towards Z))  
382 L: I du[nno I think-  
383 Z: [Ah hh  
384 L: ABC Chinese are like-  
385 C: I like ABC Chinese  
386 L: You like ABC Chinese but (.) [you don't like Chinese

In a discussion about a gay Chinese friend of Zack and Jeffrey who is unknown to Larry

and Chad but also vacationing in Hawaii, Chad announces, "Chinese is not cute" in line

370. In this statement, he is cluing in the rest of the group of his type of men by using larger categories, such as ethnicity, to describe his preferences, confirming his gay identity and further expanding on what kind of gay man he is. Stating, “Chinese is not cute” can be interpreted as, he is not interested in having romantic relationships with Chinese men. He is narrowing the scope of his type and simultaneously letting the others know of his sexual preferences specifying a GLBT identity. As the other participants at this point add to the conversation, they are constructing their own sexual preferences of what is and is not attractive. This construction of sexual preference seems to be a *bot* topic, evident by the number of participants overlapping each other (371, 372, 373, 383, 386).

As Chad and Larry are disagreeing about their preferences, Zack interjects with his own preference (line 373), which is in disagreement with Chad’s. He takes a long turn to tell a story (lines 373, 377-378) to reveal his preference for light-skinned Asian men. The fact that Zack takes a long turn and makes a repair (a repair to line 373 is continued in line 377) to disagree with Chad indicates his active participation. Further, in producing this turn, he also displays his own identity as a possible, middle-class gay Thai male from Thailand where East Asian men, marked by their fair skin, are deemed most desirable by the gay middle class (Kang, 2011, p. 175). This excerpt thus shows one of the NNS’s active participation in talk about a topic with currency in the gay community.

## Note

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this paper, I will be referring to myself in the third person as Larry.

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## Discussion And Conclusion

My analysis above shows that identity is displayed throughout talk-in-interaction, where opportunities to produce and acquire language are apparent. Previous research shows that identity can play a central role in the broader context of why and how a second language is used and produced. In a study conducted by King (2008), it was found that gay Korean English learners in Korea had an advantage over their heterosexual counterparts in opportunities to speak with English speaking foreigners. King (2008) stated that his participants believed that they had “a distinct advantage when it comes to being granted legitimacy in, and access to, target communities” (p. 233). My research is an example of gay Thai learners accessing a target community of NSs, the gay Asian American Community, through their shared identities of gay Asian men. This access could potentially open up opportunities to use and live in the target language.

Further, the analysis above suggests that students should be taught how to better navigate their identities in discourse through methods of shifting, expanding, opening, and closing topics in English. These methods can be taught through language activities that expect students to change topics effectively. It is important that students are trained to use these interactional practices so that they can competently negotiate their identities in authentic target communities to gain the invested cultural capital. As a result, students can become socially tolerant, well-informed, and critical language learners and global citizens.

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## Appendix A

(Adapted from Wong and Waring (2010), along with Richards and Seedhouse (2005))

### Transcription Conventions

Symbol	Meaning
(.)	Short untimed pause in speech
Word:::	Lengthening of preceding sound
<u>Word</u>	Emphasis on word
WORD	Capitals especially loud sound
<i>word</i>	Italicized words are translations into English
( )	Stretch on unclear or unintelligible speech
,	Comma indicates low rising intonation suggesting continuation
.	Period indicates full stop/falling intonation
-	Dash indicates abrupt cut off
?	Question mark indicates a rising intonation not necessarily a question
°word°	(Degree symbols) quiet speech
hh	Aspiration or laughter
.hh	inhalation
(hh)	Aspirations or laughter inside word boundaries
(word)	Transcriptions doubt
(( eating))	Non-speech activity or transcriptionist comment
\$word\$	Smiley voice
↑ word	Raised pitch
↓ word	Lowered pitch
> word<	Quicker speech
< word>	Slowed speech
[word]	Beginning and ending of simultaneous or overlapping speech