

"We are all sisters, so we don't have to be polite": Language choice and English language training in the multilingual workplace

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English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum for immigrant workers often centers around the need to learn English to carry out work tasks and assume greater responsibility at work. However, not all immigrant workers need to learn English to perform everyday work tasks. Furthermore, the ability to speak English

is not necessarily linked to getting ahead at work. This paper looks at the reasons why English may be associated with costs rather than benefits for some immigrant workers and examines the question of what kind of curriculum might be useful to immigrants living and working in languages other than English.

The walls of the classroom begin to shake as the tow-motor speeds by on the old wooden floor. The truck is transporting raw materials needed by some of the assembly line workers down to the production floor. The assemblers themselves, however, are not on the lines. It is lunchtime and they are sitting in the English classroom waiting for the noise to pass and for the teacher to begin speaking again. The line workers are all women and most of them are first-generation immigrants from Portugal. The noise dies down, and the teacher continues his lesson on polite ways of asking your co-worker for tools while working on the line. The women smile in amusement, look at each other, begin to laugh quietly and start talking to each other in Portuguese. The teacher is puzzled and waits for someone to tell him what is funny about talking politely on the lines. Fernanda¹ looks at the teacher, smiles and tells him that on the lines, no one has to be polite. They are all "sisters" and sisters don't have to be polite when asking each other to pass over tools. What Fernanda does not tell the teacher, and what he does not know, is that on the lines, not only do workers not have to be polite with one another, they also do not speak English to each other. The majority of the women working on the lines, like the majority of the women in the English class, are Portuguese. The language used to communicate and do production work on the lines is Portuguese. The communicative tasks that make up the curriculum the teacher is using in his workplace English language class, tasks such as asking a co-worker for tools, are not undertaken in English. They are undertaken in Portuguese.

Current English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum for immigrant workers in Britain, Canada and the United States is often

centered around the need to learn English to carry out work tasks and assume greater responsibility at work. The use of English is associated with both economic survival and economic mobility. However, not all immigrant workers working in English-speaking countries need to learn and speak English to perform everyday work tasks. Furthermore, the ability to speak English is not necessarily linked to getting ahead in the workplace. This paper aims to (1) demonstrate why for some adult learners the use of English is associated with *costs* rather than benefits and (2) discuss the question of what kind of curriculum might be useful to immigrants living and working in languages other than English. To meet these aims, I will refer to my study on bilingual life and language choice in a Canadian manufacturing factory where the majority of production line workers are first-generation Portuguese immigrant women who choose to only use Portuguese at work (Goldstein, 1991).

LANGUAGE CHOICE AND ECONOMIC GAIN

Statistics show that many immigrants living in Canada do not speak either of the country's official languages (English and French) at all and even fewer use them at home. For example, statistics on the Portuguese community in Canada show that 18.2%—almost 1 in 5—single origin Portuguese women (women who have two parents of Portuguese origin) do not speak one of the official languages (Statistics Canada, 1989).² While some of these women may simply not have access to formal English or French language training or informal opportunities for language learning, others do, but choose not to take advantage of these opportunities or choose not to use the English or French they may have learned.

In order to understand these choices, we need to re-examine assumptions that have been made about the use of official languages and access to opportunities associated with economic and social gain. Some immigrant workers who come to Canada to improve their economic possibilities in life find they can *only* do so by accessing networks within their own ethnic communities and by using their native language. For these workers, English and French may not be associated with economic and social advancement. This paper examines language choice and the use of languages other than English in terms of the *economic arrangements and possibilities* that govern people's lives. It links language choice to the political economy in which immigrant workers live out their lives and looks at workplace English language curricula in light of the relationship that can be

traced between people's language practices and their positions of class and gender within the political economy.

BILINGUAL LIFE AND LANGUAGE CHOICE ON THE PRODUCTION FLOOR

Portuguese immigrant workers who do not have access to English-speaking networks and/or ESL classes upon their arrival in Toronto are able to find and keep jobs by relying on Portuguese network ties to which they do have access and by using Portuguese, a language they are able to speak. In the Production Department at Stone Specialities, the manufacturing factory in which the study described in this paper was undertaken, 24 out of 27 Portuguese workers surveyed (88%) found a job at the company from a "friend", that is a friend of a relative or a relative of a friend or relative. Others found work at the company by responding to an ad placed in a Portuguese church paper or by following up information given to them by someone working in a Portuguese church. The majority of the Portuguese employees working in the Production Department work on assembly lines. Almost all of these assembly line workers are women, and most of them have been with the company for 16-22 years.

The company's practice of hiring Portuguese family and friends to work on the production floor and the Portuguese community's practice of finding work through community networks, has led to the creation of a Portuguese "family"/community in the Production Department. While some members of this Portuguese "family" are actual kin related by blood ties, others are not, but think of each other as family. People call each other "sister", "brother", "daughter" and "marida" which is feminine form of the Portuguese word for husband, "marido".³ A problem involving a worker who is unhappy about the boss she is working for is referred to as a "family problem". Thus, for most Portuguese workers on the production floor, work relationships and conditions at Stone Specialities are lived and represented as family and community relationships and conditions.

The use of Portuguese functions as a symbol of solidarity and group membership in the "family"/community on the production floor. Portuguese is associated with the rights, obligations and expectations members of that community have of each other at work.⁴ Members of the "family" who work on assembly lines are expected to help each other "keep the line up". If one person on a line is ahead because her particular task is easier and takes less time to complete, she is expected to help someone else whose work is piling up. Similarly, if

a person on a line needs to leave the line, someone else is expected to pitch in and help do that person's work while she is gone.

Making friends on the line and ensuring access to assistance in case your work piles up or you need to leave is related to knowing how to talk to people on the line. Furthermore, talk that provides access to friendship on the lines and thus to assistance on the lines is talk that is spoken in Portuguese. Women on the lines—including women whose first language is *not* Portuguese, but Spanish or Italian—use Portuguese on the lines to gain access to friendship and assistance when they need it.⁵

Tara: If I am on the line with you and I want to be your friend, what should I do to be your friend on line?

Angela: So all you have to do is talk with us. And if we see you can't do the job properly, then we will help you.

Odile: We will help show you what you have to do. And you need to talk to the others, so we can know about yourself.

Tara: What kind of things are important to know about me? What should I tell you about myself?

Odile: We would like to know where you worked before. If you like to work with us. We will help you to get your hands on the work so you won't feel nervous on the line.

Tara: What kind of things do people talk about on the lines?

Angela: Mostly family problems or they talk about their sons and daughters. Family matters.

Augusta: Sometimes they talk about cook[ing], movies.

John: If you're married. If you're single. If you're dating. They all want to know that kind of stuff. Or why aren't you married?

Lidia: You talk about your recipes or ask about a person who everyone is talking about. People talk about who's sick, events in people's lives.

Raquel: Some talk everyday about the cook[ing]. Some girls they talk about their husbands. Everyday about the kids. Shopping. Everything. Everything.

Tara: This is mostly in Portuguese.

Raquel: Yeah.

The value of friendship and assistance at work is not to be underestimated. When asked what advice she would give me if I were new to the company and wanted to make friends on the lines, one of the line workers, Raquel, replies, "If you have a good job already, don't come here. Because this is a change and you have to make other

friends". Friendships at work are valuable—valuable enough not to leave a job and risk not finding them elsewhere. Without friends on the line, without access to assistance, assembly workers run the risk of losing their jobs for not being able to meet efficiency standards.

As a language that is associated with the performance of a work role on the production lines, Portuguese is not only associated with finding a job through networks in the Portuguese community, it is associated with keeping a job and getting a pay check as well. For Portuguese women immigrants who have had no prior access to English-speaking networks and/or ESL classes, the use of Portuguese is the only accessible linguistic means to economic survival and gain in Canada. There are social and economic benefits associated with the use of Portuguese on the lines that are not associated with the learning and use of English. Moreover, there are *risks* to using English at work.

Line workers who don't understand what a Portuguese speaker is saying to them in English report they feel "like it's an insult" when a Portuguese speaker speaks to them in English since the speaker knows how to speak Portuguese. They also report that they will tell the speaker to "talk in Portuguese". Accommodating this preference of Portuguese on the line is important to members of the Portuguese "family" who are able to speak English. Using English with workers on the lines is risky; if people don't understand exactly what you are saying, they may assume you are talking about them and feel insulted. The following quote describes how one worker felt when a Portuguese speaker addressed her in English before she had acquired enough of the language to understand what was being said to her. It illustrates how angry people can become if they think others are talking about them in English:

"Before I'm mad because I don't speak English. I don't understand the people who talk English. It make me crazy because maybe they talk about me. . . . Now, I don't care. Before I don't understand. . . . Now, I don't speak very, very good, but I understand."

The use of English on the production lines then, is associated with social and economic risks for many of the Portuguese line workers. Line workers who depend on their "sisters" for assistance in "keeping the line up" and meeting efficiency standards cannot risk making others "mad" and losing their friendship by using English on the lines.

LANGUAGE CHOICE, GENDER AND CLASS

The language choices the line workers make can be linked to the gendered structure and dynamics of the Portuguese family and the class positions the workers hold within Canadian political economy. Although there are several different kinds of English language training programs available to immigrant women in Toronto—full-time regular high school classes at adult learning centers, full-time six-month ESL programs at community colleges, part-time ESL classes offered during the day, and part-time ESL classes at night, *access* to language training is problematic. Only 1 out of 26 Portuguese women on the lines has ever accessed ESL training of any kind. One obstacle to accessing formal ESL training has to do with not being permitted to attend language classes because of the presence of men in the classroom. Augusta, who came to Toronto with her family when she was 16 years old, started working two or three days after she arrived. She reports that she wanted to go to night school to learn English, but only managed to attend for one or two weeks before her father decided that neither Augusta or her two sisters could continue studying because of the presence of "so many boys" in the class. Other obstacles that prevent women from attending ESL classes are revealed in the conversations below:

Tara: Some people go to school when they come from another country. Did you have a chance to go to school when you first came?

Olga: Yes. When I came [to Canada], my husband come with me to the employment insurance [Canada Employment Centre] and for make a card for a social insurance number. And the girl [asked me if] I am so young why I don't go to the school? I had 19 years old when I came. I say no I came for work. I make a life. I think I make big mistake, but I never go.

Tara: Did you ever think that you would like to go to night school? Or it was too hard working and coming home?

Olga: I think it's hard, because after 4 years here I have my son. And for working the day and then the night go to the school. . . . I have to pay to the baby sitter, and the night maybe again. It's very hard for my son, and very hard for me.

Tara: Did you think about going to school when you first came here?

Lufsa: I was scared to walk on the streets at night. Because I came in August and in September the school starts. And I was scared because I hear so many strange things.

Tara: So you never wanted to go to night school.

Lufsa: I want to go, but I was scared.

Tara: And day school?

Lufsa: I had to help my friends because we had to start a new life.

Tara: When there's two Portuguese speakers speaking English and you are there, what do you think?

Angela: I would like to know English to talk to them. I have a Spanish lady telling me that I could go for six months and learn English and get paid by the government. But I didn't want to at the time. . . . I was not feeling optimistic, so I didn't want to go to school.

Tara: You didn't at that time think about going to school?

Fernanda: No at that time I don't think to go school, because I don't have a father. Me and my mother had to work alone. My [younger] brothers went to school.

While the use of English may not be necessary for economic survival and gain, it can be certainly argued that the use of English is necessary for economic mobility. Anthropologist R.D. Grillo (1989) asserts that, in multilingual societies, languages and their speakers are usually of unequal status, power and authority and there is commonly a hierarchical ordering of languages, dialects and ways of speaking. Languages that are associated with authority are "dominant" languages. Following Weber (1958), Grillo understands authority as "legitimated domination" or the exercise of power without force. Thus, dominant languages are associated with authority or the legitimate exercise of power. "Subordinate" languages, on the other hand, are languages that are not associated with authority and are restricted to use in domains from which authority is absent. Grillo argues that in a situation where mass labour migration brings speakers of languages other than the official language(s) of the "receiving" or "host" society, immigrant language speakers occupy subordinate social, cultural, economic and political statuses in that receiving society.

While many non-English speakers do indeed hold subordinate economic statuses in societies where English is the dominant language, it is necessary to question assumptions that learning and using English *unproblematically* provides access to economic power. Not all immigrant workers who learn to speak the dominant language are able to change their subordinate economic status. At Stone Specialities, higher-paying jobs off the production lines (jobs such as Quality Control inspector) are jobs that are not only associated with "good" to "excellent" English language skills, but that are also associated with the possession of at least a Canadian grade 12 education. Most of the women line workers who choose to use only Portuguese at work are working-class women who have had access to only four years of elementary school education back in Portugal. Acquiring "good" to "excellent" English and a grade 12 education is not possible with two hours of workplace ESL training a week.

TOWARDS A CURRICULUM OF ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT FOR ADULT LEARNERS OF ESL

While English language training is not always necessary for economic survival in English-speaking countries and while it does not always provide access to economic mobility, there are still good reasons for people working and living in languages other than English to participate in English language classes. In a society where English is the dominant language, not speaking English may limit the control people have over everyday living conditions and relationships. For example, Virginia tells the story of relying on a Portuguese dental assistant to translate for her during an operation for gum surgery being performed by an English-speaking dentist. After the assistant explained the surgical procedure to her, Virginia agreed to undergo the operation, but told the assistant that she wanted to go to the bathroom before the dentist started the procedure. When the assistant translated for Virginia, she told the dentist that Virginia was going to the bathroom because she was frightened of the operation and wanted to run away. Virginia, having spent some time in an English high school, understood everything the assistant said. She was so angry at the assistant's attempt to humiliate her that she decided to use English and speak to the dentist herself.

Similarly, Portuguese parents who do not speak English and need to access the services of English-speaking doctors and lawyers will sometimes ask their children to act as language brokers for them. Anderson and Higgs (1976) report that Portuguese children who translate for their parents at the doctor's and lawyer's office are privy to all kinds of secrets from which they may have normally been excluded. They also report that parents find it "much more difficult" to discipline children who act as language brokers since they are dependent on them for translation services and discretion outside the family. By increasing the control people have over everyday living conditions and relationships, English language training can provide people with expanded possibilities for functioning as members of English-speaking societies. For example, participation in English language classes may enable people to participate more fully in their children's social lives, intervene at school on behalf of their children's interests, participate in a union, or deal with corporate and government bureaucracies on behalf of their own interests (see Belfiore and Heller [1992] on the need to assist ESL students with language for dealing with bureaucracy).

Finally, immigrant workers who do not speak English may be vulnerable to unemployment during times of economic hardship when

ethnic networks fail to help them find work. Workers who get jobs in recessionary times are those who have a variety of skills they can draw upon. The possession of English-language skills may enhance workers' chances of finding new employment in case of lay-off.

English language instruction for economic protection and control over everyday living conditions and relationships must be understood differently from the way current workplace English language training is often understood. To differentiate between the two types of practices, the term "a critical pedagogy of ESL" is used in contrast to the terms job-specific language training, vocational ESL (VESL), industrial English language training, ESL training, ESL instruction, ESL teaching, English language training, English language instruction and English language teaching, all of which are presently used in the field of workplace ESL.

Following Simon and Dipbo (1986), the word "critical" in the term "a critical pedagogy of ESL" refers to an understanding of ESL practice as *transformative*. Like job-specific English language training, much of which is based on the teaching of English for everyday use and mobility in workplace situations, a critical pedagogy of ESL takes as its starting point the reality that we teach ESL to immigrant workers in an ethnically stratified society where members of different ethnic groups have differential access to valued resources and power. However, unlike the ideology underlying much job-related language training, the discourse of a critical pedagogy of ESL does not see job-specific English language training as an *unproblematic* means of accessing valued resources and power. As discussed above, English language training cannot generally invoke change in the lives of many working-class immigrant workers because of structural processes and constraints (for example, lack of a high school education) that limit possibilities for workers in our society. Instead, a critical pedagogy of ESL attempts to challenge immigrant workers' subordinate statuses by providing students with a means of thinking about their position in their communities and society and ways of increasing their access to economic, social and personal power. As will be discussed below, such thinking can be encouraged by giving ESL students opportunities to both talk about their work and life experiences and reflect on the way they talk about them.

The word "pedagogy"—as opposed to the words training, instruction and teaching—in the term a "critical pedagogy of ESL" refers to the distinction Simon (1988) makes between teaching and pedagogy in his work on "the pedagogy of possibility". As conceptualized by Simon, "teaching" refers to the specific strategies and techniques educators use in order to meet predefined, given objectives. Simon, however,

considers such strategies and techniques insufficient for constituting a practice that strives to increase students' access to power or, in his words, "a practice whose aim is the enhancement of human possibility". What is required is "a discourse about practice that references not only what we as educators might actually do, but as well, the social visions such practices would support. . . Pedagogy is simultaneously about the details of what students and others might do together *and* the cultural politics such practices support" (1988, p. 2).

A critical pedagogy of ESL is close in vision and spirit to the "problem-posing" approach associated with the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (e.g., 1970, 1971, 1973, 1985) and the work of progressive North American ESL educators who believe that problem-posing is particularly relevant to immigrant and refugee ESL students who have little control over their lives (e.g., Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Barndt, Cristal, & Marino, 1982; Bell & Burnaby, 1984; Crawford-Lange, 1981; ESL Core Group, 1983; Moriarty & Wallerstein, 1979; Pratt, 1982; Unda, 1980; Wallerstein, 1985). A problem-posing ESL curriculum is centered on *talk* about *shared* conflicts and problematic interactions. Such talk enables students to envision different working and living conditions and to generate an individual or community response to problems (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987). This kind of approach to ESL education has much to offer a critical pedagogy of ESL which strives to help students gain more control over their everyday living conditions and relationships. Equally valuable is the considerable amount of Canadian literature which has advocated for ESL instruction that serves to assist people in becoming "active participants" in society (e.g., Elson, 1989; Hernandez, 1989; Mohamid, 1989; Pierce, Harper & Burnaby, 1992; Sauv , 1989). This work also points to the need to take into account the lived realities of the learners' worlds. Finally, there have been ESL workplace programs which have been aware of the issues raised in this paper for a long time (e.g., the Centre for Labour Studies Program at Humber College in Toronto described in Belfiore and Burnaby, 1984; the Levi Strauss program in Edmonton, Alberta and Toronto, Ontario described in Belfiore and Burnaby, 1984; Bell, 1982; Sauv , 1982, and the Metro Labour Education Centre program in Toronto [e.g., 1991, 1992]). Such pioneering work also has much to offer a critical pedagogy of ESL.

However, in our attempt to empower immigrant workers through English language training, it is important to *acknowledge and respect* the costs people may associate with the use of English in their working and personal lives. By encouraging Portuguese immigrant workers to use English in interactions with Portuguese "family"/family members,

we encourage them to cross a language boundary (see Heller, 1988a; 1988b) that is associated with heavy costs. For many workers, this may not be empowering at all. An ESL curriculum shaped around interactions with non-Portuguese speakers not only acknowledges and respects the costs involved with crossing a language boundary, it also has the potential to empower Portuguese immigrant workers if particular interactions with particular non-speakers of Portuguese give them more control over their current working and living conditions. The following ESL learning activities are examples of activities that provide workers with the linguistic resources they need to make positive changes in their working and living environments.

LANGUAGE FOR DEALING WITH BUREAUCRACY

In a set of ESL materials designed to assist and support workers who have been laid-off as a result of business and plant closures and downsizings, Valerie McDonald (1992a) has created learning activities to help workers develop language skills for dealing with bureaucracy. McDonald contextualizes these activities by beginning with a dialogue that introduces a particular problem a worker is having with collecting unemployment insurance (1992a, p.11):

Ruben: Hi Nina! How's life?

Nina: Bad. I just got fired. My company is moving out of the country. The counsellor at Canada Employment told me I can't collect unemployment insurance because I haven't worked long enough.

Ruben: Are you sure?

Nina: Well, that's what she said. I didn't really understand everything. I was really upset.

McDonald then encourages discussion about the problem with a set of discussion questions (1992a, p.11):

1. What happened to Nina?
2. Why can't she collect unemployment insurance?
3. Why do you think her company is moving to another country?
4. What causes unemployment?
5. What happens in your country when someone is unemployed? Do you have unemployment insurance and welfare?
6. Have you ever lost a job?
7. Have you ever applied for unemployment insurance or welfare? What happened? Did you understand everything?
8. What can you do if you don't understand?

Finally, workers are presented with the sociolinguistic forms and information they need to deal with the problem in activities called

"Asking for Help" and "Helpful Hints". Role plays involving unemployed workers needing help with a particular problem provide people with an opportunity to work with and practice the language that has been presented (1992a, pp. 11-12).

In a similar language learning activity, Dina Pereira from the Metro Labour Education Centre (Pereira, 1992) works with unemployed workers who are interested in retraining opportunities to create a dialogue about going to see a Canada Employment Centre (CEC) counsellor about retraining. Based on the workers' actual experiences and stories about seeing a CEC counsellor, the dialogue requires workers to be confident, convincing and persistent in their interviews.

Counsellor: Good morning. What can I do for you today.

Claimant: I would like to talk to you about going to school full-time to upgrade my English.

Counsellor: How long have you been in Canada?

Claimant: Eighteen years.

Counsellor: And you never went to school to learn and upgrade your English?

Claimant: I wanted to I go to school and learn English when I came to Canada but I had to start working right away to support my family. I worked long hours at the factory and I had to take care of my family when I got home. I did not have the opportunity to go to school to upgrade my English. and learn new skills.

Counsellor: Where did you work?

Claimant: I worked in a factory but it closed.

Counsellor: How many years did you work there?

Claimant: Fifteen years

Counsellor: What type of work did you do?

Claimant: I was a machine operator.

Counsellor: You have a lot of experience in this type of work and there are still jobs available in this area. You have enough English for this type of work.

Claimant: I have been looking for work since March and companies keep saying they have no job for me. Or they say I don't have enough English and skills.

Counsellor: We have ESL programs for people that have been in Canada for three years or less. We also have English upgrading programs for people at the grade eight level or higher.. You have been in Canada for many years. Why do you want to upgrade your English now?

Claimant: Like I said before, I have been looking for a job since I was laid off and I can't get one. A lot of factories are closing. The factories that make _____ (type of product) are closing, and are not secure. There aren't enough jobs and a lot of factories now want people that speak and write a lot of and have a skill. I need to upgrade my English to get a better, secure job.

Counsellor: Did you go to school in your country?
 Claimant: Yes.
 Counsellor: What grade did you finish?
 Claimant: Grade eight. I finished primary school.
 Counsellor: How long ago did you finish school?
 Claimant: About twenty (20) years ago.
 Counsellor: You have been out of school for many years. It's going to be difficult for you to go back to school. I think you will have problems upgrading your English now and it's going to take a long time.
 Claimant: I like to learn. I read and write in my language and I know I will be able to upgrade my English if I get the opportunity to go to school. I already went to a school and they accepted me into their English upgrading program.
 Counsellor: Which school?
 Claimant: Yorkdale. . . . Here is my Letter of Acceptance.
 Counsellor: I see you want to go to school for one year to upgrade your English, but that's not going to help you get another job without other training.
 Claimant: I want to take skills training in computers. But I need to upgrade my English first before I can take a skill training program. I would like to go to school as a feepayer but I need your support so I can continue receiving benefits.
 Counsellor: Well, I will give you permission (authorization) to go to school for six months for now. I will how you're progressing in six months. Now, we have to fill out this training questionnaire in order to give you authorization to go to school and continue receiving benefits.
 Claimant: Okay.
 Counsellor: (After filling out the questionnaire - Form 2270) Sign here please. Here's your pink sheet. This is a copy of your questionnaire. Take it to school.
 Claimant: I hope you will authorize me to continue upgrading my English for six more months when I come to see you again.
 Counsellor: We will see. Call me to make another appointment in five months.
 Claimant: Okay. Thank you.
 Counsellor: Alright. Bye.
 Claimant: Bye.

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS AND SOCIAL ACTION

Going beyond individual solutions like preparing for interviews with CEC counsellors, Valerie McDonald (1992b) suggests that unemployed workers may wish to take action that gives them an opportunity to work together to improve their living conditions. Because social change is a slow process, McDonald warns that people may not see any concrete results from a particular attempt at social action; however, she maintains that the "experience can still have powerful effects on

those involved" (1992b, *Teachers' Notes*, p. 9). She suggests that individuals can develop a better understanding of the institutions and systems that affect their lives, greater skill in advocating on their own behalf, a sense of community involvement, and a sense of competence and power.

To conclude, this paper has argued for a critical pedagogy of ESL that both acknowledges and respects the language boundaries that are part of people's working and personal lives. While English language training may not always be necessary for economic survival, nor necessarily provide access to economic mobility, English language classes have the potential to encourage increased, more informed and perhaps even momentarily empowering participation in existing English-speaking societies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is based upon research I undertook for my doctoral thesis study. I would like to acknowledge and thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Monica Heller and the members of my committee Dr. Roger Simon and Dr. Barbara Burnaby for their interest and expert guidance. I would also like to acknowledge York University for its financial support and for making research funding available for part-time faculty. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Dina Pereira and the Metro Labour Education Centre are gratefully acknowledged for their permission to reproduce the ESL learning materials described in this article. The reviewers' and editors' suggestions on the first draft of this paper were most helpful and I would like to thank them for the time they took to read and comment on my work. Finally, thanks go to Dora Matos for her valuable research assistance and to Olivier Broschart for his assistance in formatting this paper.

NOTES

1. The names of the participants and the name of the manufacturing company in this study have been changed to maintain the anonymity of the participants.
2. This figure is actually low since it is based on self-reporting data.
3. Several Portuguese-speaking readers of this text have indicated that they have never heard the word "marida" used. They suggest that its use on the production floor at Stone Specialities may be unique.
4. The study of language choice in this paper is rooted within the field of interactionist sociolinguistics. An interactionist approach to the study of language choice makes use of anthropological research perspectives and traditions to investigate what makes individuals in a multilingual society choose to use one language or language variety rather than another in a particular instance. For other interactionist studies on the social significance of language choice and codeswitching (the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode) refer to Blom and Gumperz, 1972; Gal, 1979; Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b; Heller, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; and Woolard, 1989.
5. The following is a collage of data obtained from separate interviews with Portuguese line workers.
6. Reprinted from *English Language Activities for a Changing World of Work*, with the permission of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship.

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