

Performativity in the Bilingual Classroom: The Plight of English Learners in the Current Reform Context

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This article analyzes illustrative classroom events documented during an ethnographic study of bilingual classrooms in a “high-achieving” school. Through a performativity lens that emphasizes the discursive constitution of subjectivities, I demonstrate how discourses around achievement and success in the current reform context exacerbated one bilingual teacher’s deficit-oriented ideologies about English learners and their families. This analysis has implications for practitioners and researchers interested in effectively supporting our most vulnerable student populations, and their teachers, in public schools. [English learners, accountability, literacy, performativity, bilingual education]

Current accountability frameworks, coupled with English-only policy in California, and their underlying ideologies about learning, language, knowledge, and achievement are instantiated in distinct ways across particular student populations, schools and classrooms, and local communities. Together, these frameworks—specifically the English-only Proposition 227 and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001) and its attendant state reading grant program, Reading First—privilege high-stakes English standardized testing to determine competency and academic progress regardless of students’ and teachers’ life circumstances or local interpretations of reform. In this respect, the everyday contexts of classrooms and schools provide an invaluable opportunity to examine how local discourses and ideologies about students, teaching and learning, academic achievement, and schooling constitute the lived contradictions and consequences of educational reform (Engeström 2008; Engeström and Miettinen 1999).

In this article, I draw on a yearlong ethnographic study of reading practices in one bilingual third grade classroom located in a state-designated, “high-achieving” school. Specifically, I analyze three illustrative classroom events around dictionary work and homework and employ the conceptualization of performativity (Butler 1999) to emphasize the role ideologies played in one bilingual teacher’s embodiment of institutionalized authority and in some focal students’ embodiment of defeat and failure, even at this early stage of their academic career. Moreover, I analyze how the narrow construction of success implied in educational reforms was taken up in institutionalized practices and how these instantiations exacerbated this bilingual teacher’s deficit-oriented ideologies about Latina/o English learners (ELs) and their families. I argue that in the absence of assisted supportive guidance to facilitate success as defined in the current accountability framework, local interpretations of outcomes-based policies have had parallel effects on the school lives of ELs and their teachers. Just as narrow definitions of success have marginalized low-income ELs least able to participate as “good” students in reform-sanctioned ways, local school and district instantiations of educational reform have marginalized teachers least able to address their students’ diverse needs.

Importantly, this analysis raises serious concerns about the long-term, cumulative consequences of such marginalization for Latina/o ELs in schools least able to meet shifting policy definitions of success and who perhaps need the most thoughtful forms of assistance from teachers. Consider, for example, the appalling dropout, or “push-out,” rates among Latina/o youth, particularly in the Southwest, and their low graduation rates

1 (National Center for Education Statistics 2009). Specifically, data show that for every 100
2 Latina/o children who enter school, a mere 53 percent will actually graduate from high
3 school and only 11 percent will graduate from college (Huber et al. 2006), not to mention
4 their underrepresentation in gifted and talented education programs (Valdés 2002).

5 Finally, this analysis about the effects of the current accountability context on the school
6 lives of academically unsuccessful ELs and their vulnerable teachers has implications for
7 educational policymakers, administrators, teachers, teacher educators, and advocates. It
8 reminds us to consider deeply whom we inadvertently marginalize in our discursive
9 constructions of success and achievement when we create, interpret, implement, and
10 promote one-size-fits-all education reforms that disenfranchise nondominant students
11 (Gutiérrez et al. 2000). Moreover, it raises parallel concerns about the long-term, cumula-
12 tive consequences for particularly vulnerable teachers who do not quite conform to shift-
13 ing policy definitions of successful teachers but who are equally in need of supportive
14 guidance.

15 16 **Inscribing Ideologies through Social Practices**

17 This study drew on cultural-historical theoretical perspectives on human learning and
18 development that emphasize the socially and culturally constitutive nature of learning
19 (Cole 1996; Rogoff 2003; Scribner 1990; Vygotsky 1978). Neo-Vygotskian researchers have
20 employed these conceptual and methodological tools to account for the mediating func-
21 tion of ideologies in nondominant students' schooling experiences (see Engeström 2008;
22 Gutiérrez and Rogoff, 2003; Lee 2002; Tejeda et al. 2002). The significance of examining the
23 emotionally and politically contentious nature of these students' schooling experiences lies
24 in the recognition of the historical and material realities that characterize schooling for
25 nondominant students in the United States. In particular, these views recognize that social
26 practices within educational institutions are always-already imbued with the historical
27 legacies of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and linguicism (Artiles 2003). Thus,
28 nondominant students, many of whom include ELs, can experience schooling from a
29 marginal position "outside" of the dominant group norm. In the analysis presented here,
30 I conceptualize marginalization as an exclusionary process implicated in broader histories
31 of colonial, imperialist projects that foment the social, cultural, economic, political, and
32 ideological conditions within which working-class indigenous and nonwhite students
33 participate in U.S. public schools. Although some researchers use these conceptualizations
34 to argue for a decolonizing pedagogical praxis (Tejeda et al. 2002), I employ these views to
35 analyze how and why the current accountability framework jeopardizes low-income ELs'
36 academic trajectories.

37 Marginalizing discourses around particular subjectivities of students, teachers, and
38 parents within social institutions were evidenced across several typical classroom events
39 (e.g., homework check). These events resonated with me because they invoked my own
40 painful memories of schooling as a brown-skinned, Spanish-speaking child of Mexican
41 (im)migrants living in poverty. Thus, these events prompted the question, what could we
42 learn from classroom events in which power, ideologies, subjectivities, discourses, school-
43 ing, and identities came to bear on the social character of schooling? I drew on Butler's
44 (1999) notion of performativity to unpack how discursive practices around the "doing" of
45 "good" and "bad" subjects in schools were constituted in the marginalization I describe in
46 later sections. Although performativity has been used to (re)deconstruct the social rela-
47 tions that (re)produce gendered identities, here it provided the theoretical insights on
48 discursive acts that conceal their social-ideological foundations in their very "doing" of
49 social reality. In Butler's view, "the deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of
50 politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articu-

1 lated" (1999:189). That is, this view explicates how gendered categories of "boy" and "girl"
2 are reinscribed through actions, not prior to them, and that acts of regulation, subjectifi-
3 cation, and performance constrain the range of recognizable subjectivities individuals
4 (can) come to embody over time.

5 Moreover, Butler acknowledges that particular views about "boy" and "girl," and
6 masculinity and femininity, cannot be understood as existing in advance of or outside of
7 the individuals who performatively produce these subjectivities by exploiting available
8 discourses, tools, and modes of thought. Discourses play a particularly critical role in
9 analyzing these persistent frameworks, because these social acts not only remain unques-
10 tioned but also invoke the sociopolitical foundations by which individuals embody par-
11 ticular subjectivities. Specifically, "discourses are cited by and circulate in speech and
12 writing as well as visual representations, bodily movements and gestures, and social and
13 institutional practices" (Youdell in press). Anthropological methods, namely participant-
14 observations, become essential to understanding how we employ discourses, bodies, and
15 cultural tools purposely across interactional contexts. Importantly, performativity empha-
16 sizes that social actors could potentially exploit the available resources (e.g., bodies) to
17 un-"do" and transform these categories, although they are bound by and dependent on
18 these resources. Still, even in performatively rupturing or expanding these subjectivities in
19 yet-unknowable ways, social actors are bound by cultural contexts that nonetheless
20 require intelligible, recognizable, viable subjects.

21 Although performativity has been used to (re)deconstruct gender, social scientists have
22 also used these views to examine their relevance to educational contexts and issues (Davies
23 2006; Davies and Hunt 2000; Hey 2006; Youdell 2006). For example, Davies and Hunt
24 (2000) examined teaching-as-usual events in Hunt's classroom to analyze how her orga-
25 nization of individual performance, social order, and ongoing student evaluation con-
26 structed but simultaneously constrained the kinds of subjects they could be recognized as
27 being-becoming (e.g., "readers"). Working toward reflexive practice, Hunt learned that
28 during small reading groups, her students had collectively masked their assistance for a
29 struggling reader—acts that nevertheless sustained their teacher's organization of indi-
30 vidualist, orderly, and assessable forms of participation. Rather than position them as
31 "cheaters," Hunt (re)constructed students as "helpers" on reconsidering that her reading
32 groups performatively constituted individual "reader" subjects.

33 Similarly, school practitioners sustain the category of "struggling student" by legitimiz-
34 ing, rather than challenging, the evaluations (and their underlying notions of individual
35 knowledge) that determine what it means to struggle in school. As regulatory forms of
36 governmentality, the current English-only accountability framework subjectivates stu-
37 dents and teachers as individually accountable to the nation-state through apparatuses that
38 institute narrow notions of progress, targeted performance, achievement, and success. In
39 this article, I examine everyday classroom events in a bilingual third grade classroom
40 where policy-driven discourses around "success" positioned students and parents as
41 "irresponsible" and "deficient." I demonstrate how the teacher's performative constitu-
42 tion of a particular reality rendered his ideologies of "doing" teacher, "doing" student,
43 and "doing" school natural and benign.

44 45 **The Study: Examining ELs' Plight in the Current Reform Context**

46 These data are derived from a yearlong ethnographic study of the ways language policy,
47 school accountability, and reading policy at the state and federal levels affected the teach-
48 ing and learning of reading in bilingual third grade classrooms at Limón Elementary
49 School in the Orilla Del Mar School District located in Southern California.¹ In June of
50 1998, Proposition 227, the English for the Children initiative, was approved by voters and

1 essentially eliminated many of the remaining bilingual education programs that used ELs'
2 primary languages for instructional purposes in public schools. Nevertheless, many
3 high-EL districts in the state like Orilla Del Mar found legal loopholes to maintain their
4 bilingual programs, while others promptly dismantled their programs after Proposition
5 227 passed (Gutiérrez et al. 2000). That same year, California instituted the State Testing
6 and Reporting System, a state accountability system that used the Academic Performance
7 Index (API) to rank schools based on English-language standardized and standards-based
8 assessments. After 2001, the federal NCLB compounded the increasingly punitive aspects
9 around academic achievement as it substantially overhauled the outcomes by which
10 Adequate Yearly Progress was determined.

11 I undertook the study during Limón's 2002–03 school year when it was already experi-
12 encing the punitive circumstances surrounding high-stakes testing and the highly pub-
13 licated state and federal rankings (Pacheco 2005). In 2000, Limón received a state API rank
14 of five in comparison to all state public schools, and a nine in comparison to other public
15 schools that served similar student populations on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the
16 highest rank (www.cde.ca.gov). That is, in comparison to achievement results across
17 student subgroups (e.g., Filipinos) Limón performed moderately, but in comparison to
18 similar high-EL and high-poverty schools it was high ranking.² It received these notable
19 rankings even though the school district had exploited legal loopholes to maintain its
20 English–Spanish early-exit transitional bilingual programs in which most of their ELs
21 participated, thereby challenging the myth that high-poverty schools with large numbers
22 of ELs cannot also be “high-achieving” by some criteria.

23 During the period of my fieldwork, the school served a working-class Latina/o student
24 majority. Of 870 students, 86 percent were Latina/o, four percent were Euro-American,
25 and ten percent were African American, Asian American, Filipino, or other. A full 85
26 percent of them qualified for free and reduced meals, which indexed the community's
27 socioeconomic character. The school operated on a year-round, four-track schedule: it
28 housed one Spanish–English bilingual track and three tracks that included mainstream
29 English and English immersion classrooms. Sixty-two percent of Limón students were
30 labeled *English learners* and the majority were native Spanish speakers, although only just
31 over half (53 percent) participated in the school's bilingual program.³

32 The transitional bilingual program provided ELs Spanish-language instruction that
33 incorporated English Language Development (ELD) in kindergarten, first, and second
34 grade and “automatically” transitioned them to English-only instruction during the third
35 grade year. English immersion classrooms used English as the medium of instruction,
36 but teachers still used Spanish in various ways—to translate, clarify, and facilitate
37 student learning and participation. All teachers who provided primary language instruc-
38 tion had a bilingual teaching credential and collaborated with the 11 certified bilingual
39 (Spanish–English) paraprofessionals that were shared across bilingual classrooms. The
40 school also had one Resource Specialist teacher, Title I teacher, speech teacher, psycholo-
41 gist, and reading intervention teacher that served English mainstream classrooms. In
42 compliance with Proposition 227, the school offered nightly adult English classes. Thus,
43 the school provided a unique opportunity to examine in-depth the effects of educational
44 policies that were converging to privilege reductive views of reading, English-only
45 public schooling (denying ELs' home languages), and standardized high-stakes
46 testing.

47 The larger study examined reading practices and conceptualized classroom, school,
48 and district contexts as a mutually constitutive activity system that social actors imbue
49 with their own beliefs, views, and intentions, but whose contradictions could potentially
50 lead to opportunities for individual and social transformation (Engeström 2008;
51 Engeström and Miettinen 1999). Case study methods informed a yearlong examination

1 of how local interpretations of policy were affecting the organization of reading in bilin-
2 gual classrooms and how these alignments or misalignments affected the academic
3 potential of ELs (Marshall and Rossman 1999; Merriam 1998). In third grade bilingual
4 classrooms where teachers transitioned ELs from Spanish-mostly to English-only
5 instruction, bilingual teachers especially struggled over when to use what language for
6 teaching, learning, and assessment purposes. I used participant-observation methods,
7 including video recordings, to document reading practices in four bilingual third grade
8 classrooms for the duration of two curriculum units, one accomplished in Spanish and
9 one in English.

10 In-depth interviews with key school and district personnel examined participants'
11 perspectives about how the school and district interpreted state and federal policies
12 around language, reading, and accountability. I additionally volunteered as a reading
13 intervention teacher to English mainstream and EL students at various grade levels for the
14 duration of the school year, which gave me some insights into how the school conceptual-
15 ized reading instruction, especially for struggling readers. I also collected primary
16 documents that shed light on the association between state and federal policy mandates
17 and interpretations of policy at the case study school and district. Finally, I volunteered
18 across English mainstream, Sheltered English Immersion, and bilingual classrooms and
19 grade levels during the summer before undertaking the study to familiarize myself with
20 the school.

21 After coding field notes, video recordings, primary documents, and interview trans-
22 scripts for relevant themes and patterns, I analyzed how classroom literacy practices
23 aligned with state and federal policy mandates, such as an emphasis on assessment-driven
24 approaches to reading. Additionally, I analyzed the local instantiation of policy at the
25 school and district contexts and focused on the pressing concerns, agendas, current shifts,
26 and markers of success articulated by teachers and administrators, either in interviews or
27 primary documents, regarding language arts curriculum. In this article, I analyze three
28 classroom events documented in one of the third grade bilingual classrooms. These events
29 were not representative of everyday classroom practices in the other third grade bilingual
30 classrooms at Limón, but had a particular character and raised a host of questions. They
31 were typically accomplished in a whole-class setting, oriented toward the same "low"
32 students, distinguishable from ongoing language arts activity, focused on particular iden-
33 tities (e.g., "irresponsible" students), teacher-driven with minimal student responses, and
34 illustrative of the teacher's views of schooling. Two of these events emerged as important
35 because they involved a particular student, Jacobo, who experienced academic difficulties
36 in this classroom and received a disproportionate amount of scrutiny from his teacher, Mr.
37 Saunders.

38 In my initial analyses of classroom practices, I had analyzed the data about the broader
39 school, district, and state policy contexts that jeopardized, rather than enhanced, ELs'
40 academic potential. In thinking more deeply about these events, I sought to "locate" Mr.
41 Saunders across these policies and practices. As social actors always function within
42 broader sociopolitical contexts, I sought to analyze the circumstances that perhaps did not
43 create, but certainly allowed for—and perhaps even augmented—Mr. Saunders's ideolo-
44 gies (Cole 1996; Engeström and Miettinen 1999). What specific circumstances at this
45 school, situated in a particular district and state policy landscape, allowed for these typical
46 events (and ideologies) to materialize in this bilingual classroom? Put another way, to
47 isolate Mr. Saunders from these broader contexts ignores how these ideologies saturate,
48 sometimes in very salient ways, teaching and learning practices. Thus, in the following
49 sections, I locate practices across broader contexts—the state's policy landscape, the dis-
50 trict, and the school—to analyze how these contexts amplified Mr. Saunders's deficit views
51 about students and their families.

1 Findings: The Limón School Context

2 At the time of this study, the Orilla Del Mar School District, like most high-EL districts
3 in California, grappled with a convergence of educational reforms—Proposition 227 and
4 NCLB, as well as its attendant state reading grant program, Reading First, which funded
5 intervention programs for struggling readers. District instantiations of these policies were
6 reflected in the discernible shift at Limón School toward increased test preparation,
7 increased English language instruction, and decreased collaborative curriculum planning.
8 For example, the district’s Manager of Staff Development explained that assessments were
9 perceived as major indicators of effective teaching: “See, accountability is gonna point
10 back to *you*, as a teacher, your gaps. Are you surface teaching? Have you gone through
11 your repertoire of tools to make the kids own the learning? Are you really truly teaching?”
12 (interview, June 27, 2003). The district’s negotiation of the emerging accountability frame-
13 work not only legitimized implied notions of success but also employed these construc-
14 tions to symbolize locally what it meant to be an “effective” teacher. Limón School
15 administrators espoused a similar emphasis on successful outcomes.

16 According to state criteria, the Limón School staff was relatively successful given its
17 high-poverty, minority-majority, and high-EL population but remained low ranking in
18 comparison to all California schools. Despite their relative success, the staff was well aware
19 that the accountability framework unfairly evaluated their students. Across staff meetings,
20 lunchroom discussions, informal discussions and in-depth interviews with teachers and
21 administrators, grade-level meetings, and faculty memoranda, concerns emerged about
22 new curriculum adoptions, the school’s changing bilingual programs, and standardized
23 assessments (memos on August 29, 2002 and October 5, 2002). At one staff meeting, for
24 example, Mr. Salgado, the Learning Director, emphasized the importance of modifying
25 curricular programs to increase standardized test scores, especially those of ELs. He
26 suggested teachers consider replacing their regular ELD with test preparation in their
27 bilingual classrooms: “Whatever you need for test prep, let’s get it. If ELD needs to look
28 differently, then let’s do it. If we don’t get our test scores up, we’re gonna be kicked in the
29 butt by *lots* of different people” (field note, staff meeting, March 3, 2003). His urging
30 captured the pressures high-poverty high-EL schools experience to comply with account-
31 ability mandates—as well as their ongoing susceptibility. His reference to being “kicked in
32 the butt by *lots* of people” indexed the growing scrutiny historically underperforming
33 students, their teachers, and their administrators experience in the current reform context.

34 The school’s susceptibility increased test preparation and English-language literacy at
35 the expense of programs that fostered bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism, even if
36 for a limited number of grade levels. Moreover, these school and district interpretations of
37 the shifting accountability terrain neglected truly collaborative dialogues around teaching,
38 learning, and curriculum. For example, a third grade teacher reflected, “This year we still
39 picked out certain skills but we didn’t do as many grade level meetings and share
40 materials” (interview, Ms. Lucero, July 8, 2003). Collaboration at Limón meant sharing
41 materials in accordance with the skills-based outcomes teachers needed to emphasize,
42 rather than collaborative assistance, guidance, and support, particularly for vulnerable ELs
43 and their vulnerable teachers, like Mr. Saunders.

44 Mr. Saunders’s Teaching and Learning Context

45 Mr. Saunders was a teacher in one of the four bilingual classrooms in which I undertook
46 the larger study. He was in his late forties, of Euro-American descent, and a fluent
47 English-Spanish bilingual third grade teacher who, at the time of this study, had just
48 transferred to Limón because he was “excited” to learn from the school’s reputable bilin-
49

1 gual teachers. Born and raised in California, he began a professional career as a carpenter
2 but later pursued teaching, which had been his father's occupation. In the context of
3 discussing his ELs' parents, he fondly recalled what he perceived as a literacy-rich child-
4 hood in comments such as, "I don't know if you [author] had this when you were growing
5 up, but my dad was taking classes and typing up papers and my parents played Scrabble
6 and they looked up words and they had knowledge of mythology" (interview, April 21,
7 2003). He taught adult English as a Second Language (or ESL) classes at Limón three times
8 per week to supplement his teacher salary, so he had ongoing interactions with a number
9 of his students' parents who were also learning English.

10 Although Mr. Saunders might have benefited from the thoughtful assistance of his
11 colleagues, he instead experienced a discernable degree of marginalization at the school
12 among some colleagues (memos on June 1, 2002, August 28, 2002, and August 31, 2002;
13 field note, October 22, 2002; interview, April 21, 2003). One particular anecdote about his
14 relative shortcomings had become particularly renowned at Limón School. During a staff
15 meeting the previous school year, he had asked a series of questions that revealed his
16 ignorance about transitioning his third grade ELs to English reading, which especially
17 upset the mainstream fourth grade teachers who taught exclusively in English. Although
18 he felt "professionally embarrassed" by this incident, he shared, "Tammy, the [fourth
19 grade] teacher who got my students, she still treats me a little bit cruelly" (interview, April
20 21, 2003). Still, he elaborated that his colleagues and school administrators provided
21 minimal guidance, assistance, and feedback regarding literacy curriculum in bilingual
22 programs, particularly given that he had recently transferred from another school within
23 the district.

24 Even during formal teacher evaluations, Mr. Saunders believed school administrators
25 emphasized bureaucratic efficiency at the expense of being responsive to Limón teach-
26 ers' literacy approaches. He explained that his latest evaluation "was kind of a drag"
27 because the Learning Director had cancelled several observations even though Mr. Saun-
28 ders had prepared some "really good lessons." In fact, he believed that there was too
29 much flexibility and not enough accountability at the school. His notion of accountabil-
30 ity, however, reflected a preference for surveillance as he lamented that his ostensible
31 noncompliance with policy, program, or curriculum mandates went unnoticed. He said,
32 "If I do or don't [comply], the fourth grade teacher doesn't go to the Learning Director
33 and say, 'You know, those kids from Ms. Lucero's class are doing great, but the kids
34 from Mr. Saunders's class—whew!' There's no accountability" (interview, April 21,
35 2003).

36 However, among his bilingual colleagues who especially grappled with the shifting
37 policy landscape, Mr. Saunders ostensibly found collegiality as they shared both practical
38 and political views about their and their ELs' plight in the current reform context. Mainly,
39 they cooperated insofar as this joint effort resulted in substantial bilingual program
40 changes. He elaborated one telling case that occurred at the beginning of the school year
41 when bilingual teachers who exchanged or "switched" ELs according to English levels
42 during ELD instruction began colluding about abandoning ELD altogether.

44 We have a real nice way of working. I go to Leandro [a fellow bilingual teacher] and we talk. Are
45 you happy with ELD? Do you want to switch? Most of us do, but he won't. He's a man of principle.
46 So we get together and say Leandro, we need to work on getting ready for the test. This is our
47 consensus. We want you to support us, and so he caves—and we're all happy. [interview, April 21,
48 2003]

49 Of relevance, the high-stakes accountability framework gave rise to some of the ways Mr.
50 Saunders and his bilingual colleagues collaborated to increase test preparation strategies
51 even though they shared similar political views about the effects of English-only policy

1 and school accountability on their work with Latina/o ELs. In a rare instance of political
2 critique, he shared:

3
4 Mr. Saunders: It's a T.K.O. over bilingual education with a political motive to suppress the Latino
5 influence. These people come and pick our crops and that's the way we want it to stay.

6 Mariana: That's interesting. Do you think a lot of teachers share that view?

7 Mr. Saunders: Well, Leandro is close politically to me, but Bernardo, Roberto, Yanira, Cecilia,
8 Karina—we're all from the same litter politically. In addition to being colleagues, now we're really
9 good friends.⁴ [interview, April 21, 2003]

10
11 Although he perceived political alliances and friendships among his bilingual colleagues,
12 he nevertheless complained that administrators failed to "keep track" of him. In fact,
13 during my classroom participant-observations, he thankfully admitted, "Having you in my
14 classroom is really helping me tighten up my curriculum" (field note, November 14, 2002).
15 Even though I deliberately refrained from any interventionist approaches during my
16 participation, my mere presence affected his concerted effort to enhance his teaching and
17 learning practices.

18 Unfortunately, the school's social structure provided rare opportunities for teachers to
19 reflect on their practices and question the deficit-oriented ideologies that informed their
20 construction of schooling, even for teachers who valued their ELs' parents' contributions.
21 For example, during a bilingual teacher focus group, Ms. Tijerina explained: "I have a lot
22 of contact with parents. I call them at least three times during the year. I write letters. I see
23 them out front and they've been very, very helpful in helping their children with their
24 work" (focus group interview, February 11, 2001). Although other bilingual teachers
25 effectively communicated with their ELs' parents and implemented productive home-
26 work programs, Mr. Saunders rarely found opportunities to collaborate with bilingual
27 colleagues. Instead, the Limón School staff, mainstream and bilingual, felt compelled to
28 increase test scores, to start emphasizing more English in bilingual classrooms, to realize
29 a "standards-based" curriculum, and to implement new content area curricula. Regarding
30 the shifting policy terrain, one bilingual teacher summarized that she and her colleagues
31 "just duck and keep going" (focus group interview, February 11, 2001). As teachers
32 struggled to keep pace with shifting accountability frameworks, teachers like Mr. Saun-
33 ders had little recourse for transforming their classroom practices and perhaps reexam-
34 ining their ideologies about ELs and their families.

35 36 **Ideologies about Being "Disadvantaged"**

37 Mr. Saunders believed his ELs' (in)ability to "do" school well had to do with their
38 parents, their community, and their poverty and that it was unreasonable for teachers to
39 hold high expectations for these students given their life circumstances. His perception
40 was that "there's a lot of noise in the [crowded] neighborhoods" and "there's not enough
41 parental time—not because the parents don't love their kids. They do, but they're
42 working" (interview, April 21, 2003). There were certainly examples of Limón School
43 families living in multifamily arrangements, sometimes renting (often illegally) converted
44 garage spaces. He also believed they were intellectually deficient: "they are not necessarily
45 sharp, especially this year . . . and that's not their fault. It's because they don't have books
46 and . . . they have a lot of disadvantages" (interview, April 21, 2003). Yearlong documen-
47 tation of his classroom practices revealed that Mr. Saunders organized content into man-
48 ageable units of isolated knowledge, which resulted in a disjointed, fragmented series of
49 tasks and activities. For example, dictionary exercises and worksheets were typical tasks
50 during the language arts instructional block (field notes on October 22, 2002, November
51 12–14, 2002, November 20–22, 2002, and June 16–19, 2003; video, November 22, 2002).

1 His deterministic perspectives sustained his inability (or unwillingness) to conceive of
2 alternative ways to draw on students' linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources
3 (Gutiérrez et al. 1999a; Jiménez 2000; Moll et al. 1992a; Orellana et al. 2003; Reyes 1992; [1]
4 Zentella 2005). He sought instead to minimize the difficulty of classroom assignments and
5 language arts materials for his ELs (interview, April 21, 2003). For example, he tended to
6 overemphasize vocabulary development at the expense of practicing reading or impor-
7 tantly, reading for meaning (Moll et al. 1992b). "Skimming" a story for unknown vocabu- [2]
8 lary words whose dictionary definition students would later copy onto their blank sheets
9 of paper typified his reductive approach.

10 During one language arts task, he explained, "You're going to skim—not read the entire
11 story. Don't read it." As students began to search for unknown words, he later added,
12 "Remember, you don't have to read. Just go fast over the page. If you see a word you don't
13 know, write it down" (field note, June 16, 2003). Moreover, he emphasized his ELs'
14 cognitive "deficiencies" to explain their difficulties transitioning to English reading:
15

16 I think they're just overwhelmed. They're spending so much of their mental capacity decoding the
17 words, especially if there aren't any pictures. They don't know if they like the book or what the
18 book is about unless there's pictures there. So, I'm trying to get them to move to fourth grade,
19 which I taught for seven years, where the words have *meaning*." [interview, April 21, 2003]
20

21 Mr. Saunders's organization of literacy, then, reified his deficit views. These views both
22 substantiated his task-oriented, skills-oriented approach (e.g., searching for unknown
23 vocabulary, rather than actually reading) and sustained his ELs' reading challenges, as
24 they spent a disproportionate amount of time completing these tasks instead of reading for
25 meaning. Although there are numerous reasons to question an overemphasis on reduc-
26 tive, skills-based literacy tasks for ELs transitioning to English reading, these data illus-
27 trate how Mr. Saunders's ideologies about "disadvantaged" students informed his limited
28 academic expectations.

29 Furthermore, he believed high-stakes tests and district exams were "too hard" for his
30 ELs and although many educators might agree, these views informed what Mr. Saunders
31 called his "disintegrated teaching style" to make literacy learning "fun" (interview, April
32 21, 2003). His "disintegrated" style reflected conceptually disconnected tasks as he, at
33 times, spontaneously organized tasks based on a newspaper article he read or a recent
34 personal experience or mishap—for example, a discussion about a *Los Angeles Times* article
35 regarding the amount of sugar Americans consume (field note, November 13, 2002).
36 Further, his emphasis on "disintegrated" tasks, rather than learning and meaning making
37 created a "fun" environment where ELs felt accomplished. Making school "fun" was
38 essential to him. Importantly, his fragmented approach reified his ideologies because they
39 occasionally could not complete these "fun" tasks efficiently or to his satisfaction. He
40 expected students to complete "skimming" tasks within three minutes, for example (field
41 note, June 16, 2003). When students could not, he referenced their cultural and economic
42 "disadvantages" to explain their shortcomings, rather than reflect critically on his class-
43 room practices or his expectations and assumptions.

44 Nevertheless, Mr. Saunders taught at a high-achieving school with colleagues who,
45 despite many years of relative success serving ELs, had limited opportunities for collabor-
46 ative dialogues regarding curriculum practices. This neglect paralleled the current
47 outcomes-based reform context where struggling, underprepared ELs rarely find robust
48 forms of assistance, as reflected in three nonrepresentative but illustrative events I docu-
49 mented in Mr. Saunders's classroom. Moreover, these events heightened my awareness
50 about the dearth of opportunities for him to challenge his ideologies and task-based
51 "disintegrated teaching style."

1 Shifting Family Literacy Practices to “Fix” ELs

2 Typical homework assignments in Mr. Saunders’s classroom consisted of 20 minutes of
3 reading, a math worksheet, and a spelling assignment (e.g., dictionary work). He routinely
4 required students to obtain parent signatures on nightly assignments to verify that parents
5 reviewed them, or the completed homework assignment did not count. Mr. Saunders
6 tracked students’ (and parents’) compliance with school expectations about homework on
7 a displayed Homework Chart and although most ELs had a consistent set of “Xs” adjacent
8 to their names, some did not. His request for parent signatures assumed that parents or
9 guardians first, could effectively review their child’s assignment, and second, could com-
10 prehend the English-language assignments that regularly went home. Although he reason-
11 ed the parent signature confirmed the completion and accuracy of homework
12 assignments, it also served to “involve” parents in their children’s schooling, albeit in
13 reductive ways.

14 Vignette 1 below exemplifies the “symbolic violence” that imbues Latina/o children’s
15 (and parents’) experiences with schools—that bodies must be affronted to provoke the
16 right kind of parenting. It occurred during the morning routine when a teacher-selected
17 student typically reviewed the class’s homework, which on this day included copying
18 spelling word definitions from a dictionary.

19 Vignette 1: *Regulating Family Literacy, Regulating Bodies*

20
21
22 After reviewing several homework assignments, Mr. Saunders stops to ask the class, “In your
23 house, do your moms and dads have a dictionary?” A few students say “yes.” He then proceeds to
24 ask, student by student, to report whether they have dictionaries at home. He obtains only five
25 affirmative answers. Then, Mr. Saunders pauses to say, “I think I’m allergic to that information, that
26 only five of my students have dictionaries. Do you think it would be okay to ask your parents to
27 get you a dictionary? Here’s what I want you to do. I want you to grab hold of them by the shirt
28 and say, ‘Instead of just buying me toys, can you *please* buy me a dictionary? My teacher said it
29 would be *maaarvelous* and *suuuper* and *fantaaastic!!!*’ ” [field note, November 14, 2002]

30
31 In the above event, Mr. Saunders performatively constituted his students’ and their
32 parents’ deficient family literacy practices, simultaneously rendering his embodied cul-
33 tural and ideological authority as “natural” and unproblematic. He discursively displayed
34 “good” versus “bad” family in his survey of whose “moms and dads have a dictionary”
35 and positioned himself as “good” teacher in attempts to reconcile their deficiencies.
36 Moreover, he indexed his disillusionment with his ELs’ parents remarking he was “allergic”
37 to the lack of dictionaries in their homes, or that their deficiencies sickened him.

38 He invoked the symbolic violence of nondominant students’ schooling through his
39 appeal that ELs resort to physical affronts to demand dictionaries and in his diminishment
40 of their childish desires suggesting that “instead of toys” parents should buy them dic-
41 tionaries. He also devalued the choices parents made to provide their children toys—a
42 practice society lauds in families at other socioeconomic extremes. That is, these young
43 children do not need toys; what they really need is dictionaries. In this way, he imposed his
44 ideologies about “disadvantage” onto his ELs, and indirectly onto their parents. Moreover,
45 his authoritative position was reinscribed in his emphatic statement, “My teacher said it
46 would be *maaarvelous* and *suuuper* and *fantaaastic!!!*” as if his authority could help
47 parents help themselves.

48 Finally, Mr. Saunders demonstrated his narrow notions of good parenting and family
49 literacy practices. On the one hand, he equated the presence of dictionaries in the home
50 with good parenting. On the other hand, numerous formal and informal discussions
51 substantiated his minimal efforts to actually learn about the literacy practices of his

1 students' families through, for example, home visits. Some researchers have employed
 2 home visits to explore how teachers could leverage bilingual students' everyday English-
 3 Spanish translation capabilities in the classroom (Martinez et al. 2008; Orellana et al. 2003).
 4 Others have documented the *consejos* (advice), resilience, and resistance that Latina/o
 5 families impart on their susceptible children (Villenas and Deyhle 1999). Even so, Mr.
 6 Saunders demonstrated limited professional knowledge of productive ways to draw on his
 7 ELs' and their families' social and cultural resources, much less expand their deep
 8 meaning making.

9 Using Report Cards to "Get Back" at Students

11 Vignette 2 illustrates how Mr. Saunders connected competence with narrow notions of
 12 a "good" student, namely that being responsible and submitting homework promptly
 13 were essential. During a brief period before recess, he discussed his parent conferences
 14 from the preceding afternoon, which prompted him to elaborate publicly on his prepara-
 15 tion of Jacobo's report card. He framed it as an opportunity to "get even" and "get back"
 16 at him.

17 Vignette 2: Mr. Saunders "Gets Back" at Jacobo

19 In the last ten minutes before recess, Mr. Saunders briefly discusses upcoming parent conferences.
 20 He turns around to erase the whiteboard behind him as the students sit quietly at their desks facing
 21 him. He erases a list of names written on the lower right-hand corner with particular notes:
 22 students that need to complete their homework, students that need to return paperwork from
 23 home, etc. As he erases, he asks Jacobo if he completed last Friday's homework and Jacobo replies
 24 "yes." Abruptly, Mr. Saunders stops erasing and says, "Oh, Jacobo." Turning to face Jacobo, he
 25 continues, "I finally got even with you. For aaaaaaall those times you made me wait for homework
 26 and forms, I finally got back at you. On your report card, I started with something nice—I always
 27 like to start with something nice, like *Jacobo has a nice personality*. But then I said something like, *he*
 28 *also needs to be more responsible*, or something like that. That's one of the reasons why I like report
 29 cards so much." Jacobo does not respond and Mr. Saunders erases the whiteboard as students
 30 observe quietly. [field note, November 12, 2002]

32 The performative aspect of this report card incident advanced Mr. Saunders's notion of
 33 "irresponsibility"—and conversely, "responsibility"—such that being responsible in this
 34 classroom meant promptly returning "homework and forms" and not "making [him]
 35 wait." Mr. Saunders in essence alerted his ELs to potential retribution through the report
 36 card. Accordingly, this routine event revealed the socially (and politically) complex nature
 37 of report cards and schools for particularly vulnerable students like Jacobo, as well as Mr.
 38 Saunders's institutionally legitimated authority to exercise a relative degree of power over
 39 students' constructed academic identities.

41 To be sure, Jacobo faced substantial educational challenges. According to Mr. Saunders,
 42 he was a "low" student with serious academic challenges: he was a below-grade-level
 43 reader, could not accomplish typical literacy tasks Mr. Saunders organized, and per-
 44 formed poorly on district and state exams. Ironically, he experienced difficulties in Spanish
 45 reading and transitioning to English reading despite my documentation of his regular use
 46 of English in and outside of the classroom (field notes on November 13, 2002, November
 47 22, 2002, June 16, 2003; interview, June 21, 2003). Still, the punitive measures Mr. Saunders
 48 established around narrow ideologies of schooling and his subsequent actions con-
 49 strained, performatively, the subjectivities Jacobo could potentially embody.

50 Further, Mr. Saunders reinforced Jacobo's susceptibility in this classroom, as he
 51 invoked his power to construct (temporarily) an adversarial relationship between him and

Jacobo. At the same time, he indexed the other students' ongoing susceptibility by way of the report card. The district report card included a teacher's comments section, which provided teachers the space to document their perceptions about their students' progress, academic or otherwise. Importantly, these comments did not require direct evidence. In his comments about Jacobo's irresponsibility, Mr. Saunders institutionalized this student's academic identity that albeit subjective, school systems nevertheless authorize with little mediation. He established his authority to position students both publicly and on paper—as he did with Jacobo—and invoked the asymmetrical power relations between teacher and student. As performative acts, the practices and discourses around the report card—an institutional artifact—substantiated Jacobo's irresponsibility, rather than challenging the report card's underlying notions about competence and successful students.

Mr. Saunders's inability or unwillingness to reconcile Jacobo's recurrent difficulties in complying with school demands reflected his lack of professional expertise around mediating schooling for less successful students. During my yearlong participation, I rarely observed him attempting to alleviate Jacobo's evident needs. For example, he might have explored the specific circumstances that made compliance difficult, modified these requirements, or reconsidered altogether the educational significance of requiring a parent or guardian signature.

Collectively Disciplining "Bad" Students

Vignette 3 occurred during a typical morning when Mr. Saunders again took issue with Jacobo. This time, he recruited the entire class to determine collectively Jacobo's penalty for his negligence, as he asked them to determine how many points Jacobo's team should lose for his infraction—failure to submit homework on time. Students exercised their temporary power to challenge each others' bids at the expense of Jacobo, who sat quietly awaiting the verdict.

Vignette 3: Tracking Students, Tracking Parents

Mr. Saunders stands near Carola to observe as she verifies that everyone has completed their homework and submitted a white index card with parent (or guardian) signatures. He then focuses on a couple of students who failed to follow homework instructions. Mr. Saunders notes that Jacobo has submitted his completed math worksheet but does not have an index card with a parent signature and announces, "Class, Jacobo didn't turn in his homework either. Team B, what should the penalty be for Jacobo? ((*pause*)) Jacobo is not giving me—let's back up. Jacobo, did someone check your homework last night?" Jacobo quietly nods his head to which Mr. Saunders responds, "How do I know? How do I know someone checked your homework if it's not si:::gned ((*holding up the white index cards*))?" From his desk in the back of the classroom, Jacobo replies, "They did." Mr. Saunders replies, "Your homework *did* get signed? Where is it? I want to see it." Mr. Saunders walks to the side table, briskly retrieves the pile of fastened homework assignments, and holds the pile out for Jacobo's retrieval. Jacobo walks toward his teacher and grabs hold of the pile of papers, then walks back toward his chair, with his head bent downward and slowly swaying from side to side with every step. Mr. Saunders stares at Jacobo walking back to his seat and then shifts his attention to the remainder of the class. He asks, "How many points should we take away? Two? Five?" Students begin to yell, "Two!! Four!! Five!!" In a noticeably loud voice, Lino yells, "Fiiiiiive!!!!" Mr. Saunders ends the exchanges with, "Five? Okay, let's take five away. Lino, go erase five points from Team A." After Jacobo sits at his desk and searches through the pile of homework papers, he stands and returns the stack to Mr. Saunders. At the same time, Lino stands in front of the *Team A vs. Team B* running tally on the whiteboard and interjects, "Do I erase them [the five points] and put them on ours?" Lino's question goes unanswered as Mr. Saunders stares at Jacobo and remarks, "Jacobo, you're killing me, man." [field note, November 14, 2002]

The context of this vignette is the Team A versus Team B competition, one of two salient approaches to external motivation Mr. Saunders used to reward and punish students. The

1 other method was The Good List, which he used to reward “good” students who selected
2 prizes from a treasure chest on Friday afternoons; he restarted the list on Monday morn-
3 ings. In this classroom event, Mr. Saunders spoke directly to Team B and established a
4 temporary alliance to discipline Jacobo when he asked, “How many points should *we* take
5 away?” Team B eagerly took up this opportunity and Lino earned the “privilege” of
6 erasing points from Jacobo’s team.

7 Vignette 3 illustrates that in this classroom, compliance with teacher demands mattered
8 more than Jacobo’s potentially lost opportunities to practice academically significant skills
9 because he neglected to submit his homework, signed, on time. Mr. Saunders marginal-
10 ized Jacobo and his parents as neglectful: Jacobo failed to obtain a parent signature for his
11 homework but his parents also failed to verify the completed assignment. Still, Jacobo bore
12 the brunt of the penalty. Even though Mr. Saunders used “someone” to refer to Jacobo’s
13 parents and Jacobo used “they,” he placed responsibility on Jacobo remarking, “Jacobo,
14 you’re killing me.” At the same time, however, Jacobo’s positioning indexed to the class
15 the retribution they faced, potentially, for being irresponsible students and having ostens-
16 sibly irresponsible parents. Moreover, the class’s participation in this marginalization
17 potentially negatively affected them, because Mr. Saunders encouraged the collective
18 exclusion of their long-time bilingual program classmate.

19 I found these everyday classroom events compelling, particularly because Mr. Saunders
20 involved students’ bodies and generated a degree of excitement among some students at
21 the expense of marginalized others. In this case, Mr. Saunders facilitated performative acts
22 during Jacobo’s punishment such that the distribution of bodies across classroom spaces
23 sustained and reified asymmetrical power relations and institutional practices (Butler
24 1999). Jacobo in turn evidenced the cumulative effects of this marginalization in his
25 embodiment of discomfort—and I would posit shame—in his downward gaze, the
26 bobbing of his head, and the slow swaying movements he made walking to the desk
27 located farthest away from everyone. Furthermore, Jacobo evidenced his “good student”
28 performances from the classroom margins: he frequently wrinkled his eyebrows, gazed at
29 the ceiling with his index finger positioned on his chin, raised his hand regularly to answer
30 questions, and contributed random answers even when selected. This event hence was not
31 merely about bodies in classrooms and schools: it was, too, about how ideologies regard-
32 ing academically successful and unsuccessful students are inscribed onto and through
33 students’ and teachers’ bodies and performances.

34 35 **Personal Reflections on Schooling for Bilingual Students**

36 The everyday events discussed here illustrated how differential power relations
37 imbued the social practices that constituted classroom life. The negotiation of power and
38 identities permeated literacy learning processes, as well as the social practices organized
39 to facilitate these processes, although we tend to overlook these dimensions in discussions
40 centered on the consequences of educational reforms on students and teachers. I, too,
41 initially overlooked these dimensions. When I observed these events, I questioned their
42 relevance to my research goals and wondered if my sensitivity to them was instead a
43 symptom of my own academic vulnerabilities as a former student of bilingual programs.
44 Over the course of the school year, I grew acutely aware of the degree to which outcomes-
45 based, assessment-driven literacy practices in Limón’s bilingual third grade classrooms
46 positioned students as well as their families and communities in a deficient light. Of
47 import, although these illustrative events emerged in less patterned ways, they emerged in
48 pronounced ways as I connected most personally with these schooling narratives.

49 At times, I relived my schooling experiences through students like Jacobo. I recalled the
50 profound sense of shame I had felt—for being darker, speaking Spanish, being poor,

1 having parents that were not “normal,” wearing second-hand clothes, and standing in
2 lines for free and reduced lunches. As a Limited English Proficient student in the late
3 1970s, I remember being pulled out with other Chicana/o students, feeling lost in a sea of
4 unfamiliar English, and feeling there was something I was not quite “getting” but desper-
5 ately trying to figure it out. This affiliation provoked an empirical examination of the
6 consequences of everyday events in Mr. Saunders’s and other bilingual classrooms on
7 specific children and led me to document them in refined ways. For example, I tallied the
8 frequencies and distribution of turn taking during small reading groups in other third
9 grade bilingual classrooms based on my initial observation that some struggling readers
10 were regularly excluded (Pacheco 2005). The events discussed earlier were rare, but were
11 the ones I experienced markedly, and so I examined them deliberately for the narrative
12 they reflected about low-income nondominant students’ schooling experiences.

13 Through extended dialogues with colleagues and multiple analyses, I came to under-
14 stand that my attention to the social and power dimensions of classroom life comple-
15 mented cultural-historical conceptualizations of literacy learning activity. This social
16 dimension of identity and power had everything to do with everyday practices and
17 enhanced, in my view, current discussions of policy effects on the schooling experiences of
18 academically vulnerable students. My personal experiences as a Chicana bilingual student
19 from a working-poor (im)migrant family in California public schools provided critical
20 insights into how school structures and practices that imply narrow views of success can
21 harmfully affect those of us who least fit these constructions. Analyses of typical events in
22 Mr. Saunders’s classroom revealed how we leave behind vulnerable, less successful teach-
23 ers and vulnerable, less successful students when we fail to acknowledge how our edu-
24 cational systems neglect their particular learning needs.

25 A strict focus on successful high-stakes accountability outcomes to define effectiveness
26 and legitimate “true” learning draws attention away from the everyday institutional prac-
27 tices that affect students’ and teachers’ learning opportunities. That is, improving out-
28 comes can preclude serious discussions about alternative ways to reorganize schooling
29 policies and practices that expand students’ and teachers’ potential through thoughtful,
30 strategic, deliberate assistance. Recall that what drove faculty and grade-level meetings
31 were palpable concerns about meeting state and federal mandates (e.g., getting “kicked in
32 the butt” for low test scores), rather than collaborative dialogues about strategic ways to
33 provide meaningful literacy instruction for students, especially their numerous ELs. Simi-
34 larly, as Mr. Saunders struggled to meet the needs of his academically weak students, his
35 race-based, deficit-oriented ideologies provided an explanatory framework about his ELs’
36 shortcomings. At the same time, he found minimal opportunities to reflect critically and
37 receive productive assistance regarding ways to organize and reorganize his classroom in
38 ways that respond to his ELs’ needs, even in a policy context that increasingly exacerbates
39 their vulnerabilities.

40 41 **Conclusion: Enhancing ELs’ Academic Potential**

42 This analysis of three illustrative classroom events provided a lens through which to
43 examine underlying ideologies, motivations, attitudes, power struggles, and dispositions
44 in the ebb and flow of classroom life. Rather than dismiss these isolated events or this
45 teacher as “mean-spirited” or “racist,” I recentered these data in an outcomes-based
46 accountability framework that heightened the vulnerabilities of ELs and their teachers.
47 Interviews with Mr. Saunders revealed how an accountability framework that justified,
48 rather than facilitated, academic success confirmed his ideologies about modest-income,
49 Latina/o ELs, their families, and community. Although this framework identified and
50 ranked who was making “adequate progress” and who was not, it did little to disturb his

1 notions of academic success, particularly when his ELs struggled to make such “progress.”
2 Some teachers can effectively transform classroom events that can initially be perceived as
3 disruptive—for example, a socially disruptive utterance—into educationally valuable
4 “third spaces” (Gutiérrez et al. 1999b). On the contrary, the ruptures in Mr. Saunders’s
5 classroom reflected the language ideologies, classism, and racism of current educational
6 reforms via their biased testing, English-only, and chastisement of low-performing stu-
7 dents and schools (Luke 2003; Shannon 2001).

8 Mr. Saunders positioned ELs and their parents as “irresponsible” and “deficient” but
9 the point is not merely about degrees of responsibility, but about the lack of assistance,
10 guidance, and support available to mediate policies and practices for students like Jacobo
11 and teachers like Mr. Saunders who experienced particular challenges. Moreover, the
12 individual-based, team-based competitions used to marginalize “bad” students in his
13 classroom stifled the kind of peer relations that facilitate mutual peer academic support.
14 Early in these bilingual third graders’ academic careers, they were being socialized to
15 individuality and competition, rather than collectivism, mutual care, and collaborative
16 learning (Antrop-González and De Jesus 2006; Gutiérrez et al. 1999a; Rogoff 1994). It is
17 important to note that the ELs in this classroom rarely questioned, resisted, or defied their
18 teacher’s practices, but it remained unclear how they exercised their agency and resis-
19 tance, and what their participation in these events signified.

20 In this analysis, I sought to understand why Mr. Saunders’s ideologies and discourses
21 about the most vulnerable students like Jacobo persisted in this particular bilingual class-
22 room, in this state-sanctioned successful school, in this district, and in this state. From a
23 cultural-historical theoretical perspective, these broader contexts did not simply “sur-
24 round” classroom practices but illuminated the institutionalized practices and discourses
25 that mutually constituted them (Cole 1996; Engeström 2008; Engeström and Miettinen
26 1999). The dialectic relationship between local policy instantiations and bilingual class-
27 room practices revealed that at Limón, Mr. Saunders was in effect marginalized from his
28 mainstream colleagues and that collaborative dialogues with his bilingual colleagues were
29 limited to sharing materials. Thus, he had few opportunities for the kind of assistance,
30 guidance, and support that might have mediated his classroom practices to help his less
31 successful ELs navigate schooling, as well as mediate his deficit-oriented ideologies.
32 Regrettably, life on the margins in an outcomes-based rather than process-based, equity-
33 based accountability framework heightened his ELs’ academic vulnerabilities.

34 Although discussions about ways to enhance ELs’ academic potential typically focus on
35 enhanced curriculum approaches, instructional strategies, and language-based programs,
36 they neglect a serious critique of neoliberal education policies that adversely affect them
37 and their teachers. These policies particularly intensify schooling conditions for ELs from
38 low-income families and their teachers (Gándara et al. 2003), reducing success to a discrete
39 set of school-based literacies in English and with regard to ELs, employing overly deter-
40 ministic views of language learning and development in their testing practices (Solano-
41 Flores 2008; Valdés and Figueroa 1994). They ignore the depth and breadth of these ELs’
42 rich sociocultural and linguistic experiences and augment deficit-oriented ideologies of
43 nondominant students, families, and communities (Valencia and Solórzano 1997).

44 To enhance the academic potential of Latina/o ELs, teachers need expanded repertoires
45 of assistance strategies that reflect sound, even empowering, approaches that reject deficit-
46 based perspectives and instead build their languages, cultures, group histories, and intel-
47 lectual capabilities (Tejeda et al. 2002). Moreover, teachers must begin to acknowledge
48 parents’ and community members’ expertise and seek to learn from and about ELs to
49 organize transformative approaches to literacy curriculum (Luke and Carrington 2003).
50 Mr. Saunders, for example, might have experimented with curriculum that expands the
51 linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources of ELs—approaches that presume at the

1 outset they have valuable resources to contribute to their learning. Specifically, he might
2 have benefited from approaches that build on bilingual students' translating experiences
3 to expand their academic writing (Martinez et al. 2008; Orellana et al. 2003) and opportu-
4 nities for teachers to learn about Latina/o children's political-historical knowledge around
5 social issues (Pacheco 2009). Curriculum approaches that value the abundantly resourceful
6 cultural experiences of ELs might have, over time, shifted his deficit-oriented views and
7 ideologies, even in the current reform context.

8 In this article, performativity enabled a deeper examination of how raced and classed
9 ideologies were discursively constituted and inscribed on and through students, parents,
10 and teachers. Of import, performativity emphasizes that just as social actors exploit
11 available resources to reproduce particular social categories, the performative space poten-
12 tially also enables the serious disruption of these categories as social actors exploit new but
13 intelligible tools, discourses, and resources. Herein lies a profound opportunity for
14 teacher educators. Although teachers can (re)inscribe particular ideologies through cur-
15 riculum practices, including everyday routines, teachers can also disrupt the very frame-
16 works and conventions around learning, knowledge, achievement, and success that
17 structure school life. Disrupting the very conditions that define "doing" school requires
18 teacher educators, and teacher preparation programs, to commit to promoting equitable
19 schooling policies as well as curriculum approaches that deliberately un-"do" the legacy of
20 deficit-oriented ideologies on which traditional curricula are founded. Finally, these dia-
21 logues could promote ways to accommodate, modify, reject, or challenge policies and
22 practices that preclude low-income ELs, like Jacobo, from achieving their academic
23 potential.

24 Although it is useful to examine educational policy effects on a larger scale, anthropo-
25 logical approaches reveal how educational reforms are instantiated and experienced in the
26 performative constitution of students' and teachers' everyday life, in often painful ways.
27 The routine events I analyzed here were unfortunately consistent with the historical
28 experiences of many low-income language minority students, many of them (im)migrants
29 and refugees, in U.S. public schools. In future studies, a focus on non-representative but
30 illustrative classroom events can serve as powerful tools to unearth the frameworks used
31 to reinscribe particular subjectivities in schools, and their implications for particularly
32 vulnerable student populations.

34 Notes

- 35 1. All names are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of participants.
36 2. See California Department of Education n.d.
37 3. This figure does not account for the percentage of former bilingual program ELs that had been
38 reassigned to English mainstream classrooms or redesignated as Fluent English Proficient.
39 4. "T.K.O." is an abbreviation for "technical knockout" and is widely borrowed from boxing. It
40 denotes the end of a boxing match when one opponent is rendered ineffective.

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