CHAPTER 22

# "Culture Has No Internal Territory"

## Culture as Dialogue

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There is a growing consensus among educators that attention to the notion of culture is important for promoting democracy, equity, and quality of education. It has been demonstrated that the teachers' and students' cultures can clash in the classroom, negatively affecting educational processes (Heath, 1983; Philips, 1993). Often this phenomenon is explained using an essentialist approach focusing on pre-existing cultures. In this chapter, we will discuss problems with essentialist approaches and explore an alternative, dialogic, approach to the problem of "cultural mismatch."

There are at least two different types of approaches to the notion of "culture" that are used in educational research and practices. According to an essentialist view, culture is seen as a central preexisting factor – a way of doing things and communicating among each other distributed in a particular social group – that frames our relations with culturally different others. It is assumed that cultural differences can sometimes cause breakdowns in relations, particularly between culturally diverse groups. The other perspective can be called a constructivist and dialogic approach that sees culture as one of the several explanations for breakdowns in relations among people.

We argue that the essentialist type of approaches to culture, although useful at times, can lead to unilateral pedagogies while the dialogic approach to culture promotes collaboration and dialogue among the teacher and the students (and beyond). One important issue we will address here is the question of what culture is and how culture emerges from breakdowns as an alternative view to cultural differences creating or causing breakdowns. This can be an important theoretical shift, for it transforms the way educators deal with problems of cultural diversity in research and practice.

### Essentialist Approaches to "Other Communities" in History and Education

Historically, there have been several major essentialist approaches of how to deal with the issue of culture in education. Before the notion of "culture" fully emerged by the end

of the 19th century (accidentally or not, concurrently with the establishment of mass schooling) as an explanation for systematic human differences in behavior of groups, racial subspecies theories dominated Western discourse about differences. According to these theories (varying in details), the human species consists of several biological subspecies (races) with European subspecies intellectually at the top, and the other human subspecies comparatively being limited (either totally or partially within the group population). For example, the term "mulatto," commonly used in French and Spanish colonies, referred to people of mixed races (Black and White). The Spanish word "mulato" (literally "a little mule") came from the word "mule" emphasizing unnatural breading of different species – a sterile hybrid offspring of female horse and male donkey (Hochschild, 2005). In these racial approaches, behavioral differences among different groups were explained by biological limitations (Gould, 1996). Because of the biological limitations of intellect in non-European subspecies, guidance, if needed, has to be "biologically sensitive" (i.e., it does not make sense to teach a cat calculus!) – formal education for inferior subspecies was recommended to be segregated, limited (often to training skills useful for slave owners), or not provided at all.

Already by the end of the 18th century, it became clear for some Western progressive intellectuals and activists that biological approaches to human group differences were an ideological cover-up for slavery, murder, oppression, and exploitation that was increasingly at odds with the ideology of democracy emerging in new bourgeois Western societies (Anderson, 1991; D'Souza, 1995; Hochschild, 2005). Western imperialism and power domination were redefined, explained, and justified in historical and cultural terms – new historico-cultural deficit approaches were raised (Hochschild, 1998). Non-European (and some European-like Eastern and Southern European) societies became to be seen as culturally and historically primitive and backward. These historico-cultural deficit approaches were

based on universal progressivism and social Darwinism (Hofstadter, 1955). According to universal progressivism, cultural differences between human societies were explained by an unevenness of historical development among (and even within) societies (all the while relying on teleological understandings of societal progress). The Western societies were seen as historically ahead of many other societies whose primitive cultures represent the historical past of Western societies (see, for example, Vygotsky, Luria, Golod, & Knox, 1993). Because of their historico-cultural superiority, Western societies were not only justified but morally obligated to dominate and guide historically backward and culturally deficient societies (see, for example, Luria, 1976).

It is important to mention here that this dominance, guidance, and patronage were often viewed as temporary phases of development of a culture within the historico-cultural deficit approaches. Historico-cultural deficits were seen to be remedied by social engineering the environment of the culturally inferior societies and through formal education. When in the early 1960s, Jerome Bruner, a well-known and well-respected US psychologist and educator, testified in the US Congress to advocate for a "War on poverty," he used his experiments with rats deprived of "natural" environmental stimulations to justify the establishment of the Head Start program for children of color and poverty (Bruner, 1998). Making parallels between the cognition and behavior of rats, raised in sterile conditions, and the cognition and behavior of children of poverty and color in the United States sounds absurd, invalid, and disrespectful now. The problem was not so much that the rats in psychological labs were used to model human psychological processes, but it was in the fact that the rats-psychologists relations in the United States (or dog-psychologist relations in the Tsarist and Soviet Russia) were used to guide human (power) social relations.

However, against the backdrop of biological approaches to human behavior and cognition, deficit approaches emphasizing cultural and environmental deprivation

appeared to be more progressive and less racist, sexist, and classist than biological approaches (Boykin, 1986). It was argued that educationally, cultural deficits can be addressed through educational remediation and enrichment (see, for example, Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966 for such efforts).

Probably due to the defeat of colonialism around the globe and the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, deficit approaches were increasingly put under attack. In the 1970s and onward, in the social sciences, critique of deficit approaches led to the emergence of new approaches that argued that the problem that many groups face in school (and other Western-based institutions) is due to cultural differences and Western historical dominance and hegemony rather than in the unevenness of societal development and progress (Bradley & Bradley, 1977; Cole & Bruner, 1971; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Ogbu, 1978; Ryan, 1971). Out of all approaches oppositional to biological, cultural, and environmental deficits, so-called "cultural mismatch" approaches are probably most powerful and widespread (and the most coherently oppositional to the deficit approaches). According to cultural mismatch approaches, all cultures have rich "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992); however, conventional schools utilize and privilege only mainstream middle class cultures (Heath, 1983; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). Conventional middle-class-oriented schools and the students from non-mainstream communities have different cultural expectations, values, norms, and tools. When the different cultures face each other, they often go on a collision course without even knowing that the collision is caused by a cultural mismatch. Since mainstream middle-class-oriented schools have more power over the students from non-mainstream, less powerful, communities, the collisions are often publicly defined and framed in terms of blame and deficits (Rogoff, 2003). The cultural mismatch approach guides educators to appreciate, value, and utilize students' home cultures and provide forms of instructions that are congruent with the students'

cultural ways of learning (cf., the concept of "culturally responsive pedagogy" Ladson-Billings, 1994). We argue that although cultural mismatch approaches are pedagogically more sound than deficit approaches, they are also faced the problem of being essentialist like deficit ones (cf. discussion of the European history of the colonialist/Orientalist discourses in Said, 1979). The following example can help both illustrate the cultural mismatch approach and reveal its theoretical and practical limitations.

## Problem of Cultural Mismatch: "Look at ME!"

In order to demonstrate and analyze the essentialist nature of the cultural mismatch approaches and the problems this poses, we present a case of a communicational breakdown between a White Afrikaans teacher and 10-year-old Black child of Sotho descent who is in his first days of classes at an all-Black student private school in a Black township outside Pretoria, South Africa. In this area of Guateng province in the Republic of South Africa (and in the township and in the school), the majority of the Black population is Sotho. Zulu is the next largest group. The whole episode that we videotaped in South Africa in 2003 lasted only less than 2 minutes.

At the beginning of the school year in January, all students in the school have an assembly at the large open school field for sport games and physical education each morning, before summer heat sets in and before other classes start. The fourth grade class sits on the grass in four rows while their White Afrikaans teacher stays in front of the rows of the students and provides her guidelines about upcoming sport activities. At some point, the teacher notices that one of the boys has long pants. She wonders why and wants to make a point to him that next time he comes to school he should wear short pants because of school policy. While talking with the child the teacher notices that the Black student is putting his head down and not looking at the teacher when

she is speaking to him. The white teacher repeatedly demands that the Black student look at her while she is talking to him (she repeatedly asks him to "look at me! look at me!"). The more she demands this, the more he puts his head down and remains silent. Although she tries to be helpful and friendly to him by using a soft voice, and using welcoming and non-threatening words like "dear," "please," and "sweety," reassuring him that "nobody's going to shout at you," and providing her reasoning for her demand, she apparently cannot establish eye contact with the boy.

White Teacher (talking to the Black boy in long pants): Where're your short pants, sweety? (going around the rows of the children sitting on the grass close to the boy)

WT (yelling at other children): Hey! Hey! ... Stop it!

WT (back to the boy): Where are your short pants? Don't you have any shorts? What school were you at last year? Matsefu, don't you have any other short pants? (The boy puts his head down.)

WT: Listen, Mark, dear ... Look at me! Look at me! Look at me! ... Look at me!

WT: Tomorrow, put on any short pants, OK?

WT (showing at another boy): Stand up, Meseti. You see, Meseti got anything on [i.e., he is wearing short pants]. You see Meseti?

WT: Nobody's going to shout at you. ... please, please put on short pants, OK? Fine.

WT: (continues talking to the boy): Either you fasten your shoes properly or you take them off, please!

WT: (yells to everybody): And everybody sees they [shoes] are fastened properly! You'd hurt your ankles if you don't fasten them.

Afterwards, we interviewed a Black teacher from the school about the incident and found out that it is common in African Sotho communities for children to

look down when an elder talks to them to show their respect. He also talks about confusion for the Black youth to communicate in places where white people are in charge (explicitly mentioning the school).

Black Teacher: ... it would not be proper to look at someone straight at upper, straight in the eye. We just look down and short ... in a way, you're showing respect by doing that. But now as we ... what happens ... there is that mixture of conscience [?]. There will be a time we get confused. ... "Where do I draw the line? When should I do? ... When I want to look straight into the face and when should I look down?" Then as time goes on you can actually [draws a line in the air] ... actually decide now: if I'm talking to talk to this person, this is what I'm going to do; but if I'm talking to this person this is what I'm going to have to do. Yeah. So, um ... That's why I'm saying ... with most of kids who are living, [growing up] in an urban environment ... they're sort of [unclear] ... but then if finally they're moving in and out ... it happens in rural ... rural areas ... you get that confusion now ... Cause when they go out in those rural areas, the kids will be expected to do something different. But it also depends on how long they stay and [?] ... to see where ... this difference, difference comes in.

He also tells that Sotho and Zulu African traditional communities are different in this regard. In Sotho traditional communities youngsters are expected not to look directly at the elders, while in Zulu traditional communities they are expected to look directly while elders talks to them.

It is clear from the episode that the Afrikaans teacher is not aware of these cultural differences and assumes that the Sotho boy does not look at her directly because he feels threatened by her. For that reason she seems to use a tender voice and gentle addresses to the boy like "sweety" and "dear." She insists to him that she is not shouting at him. Although we did not interview her afterwards, she probably feels uncomfortable when the student she talks to does

not allow establishing his eye contact with her. She appears to be aware of her own discomfort in this interaction and deliberately attends to how to fix this discomfort by making the student establish eye contact using several strategies. She is aware of breakdown in their interaction – she cannot simply deliver her message of intent that the boy needs to have short pants instead of long pants in future – but she seems to feel that she is forced to focus on changing the way their interaction is organized. However, her attempts to change the organization of their interaction were failing. It is difficult to say how the Sotho boy interpreted the event but it is very reasonable to assume that he also took an active stance to it. This situation seems to be very similar to one observed and described by Philips when White Anglo teachers felt uncomfortable when they could not establish their eye contact with some Native American students when addressing them (Philips, 1993). However, unlike American White teachers observed by Philips, the South African Afrikaans teacher does not seem to consider the boy disrespectful, challenging, and aggressive.

Textbooks on multicultural education often recognize this and similar cases as examples of "cultural mismatch": the teacher and the student come from two distinctively different pre-existing cultures and the teacher is probably unaware of the cultural nature of the child's behavior and misinterprets it as, for example, the student's shyness or fear (in our case) or aggressiveness and disrespect (in Philips's case). These multicultural education textbooks recommend that teachers learn about students' home and their own cultures to become aware of potential cultural differences and mismatches. This awareness can help avoid the teacher's blaming or developing adversarial relations (see, for example, Nieto, 1996). However, using an essentialist cultural interpretation for relational breakdowns may or may not be helpful for the teacher. While the essentialist cultural interpretations may help the Afrikaans teacher and other educators avoid blaming the child for being disrespectful by

not looking at her when she speak, it does not guide what educators should do after the realization of the mismatch. Indeed, what should the teacher do in the case when he or she *needs* to see the student's eyes directly when talking to the student, while the student *needs* to hide his or her eyes when a person of authority talks to him or her?

The realization of mismatch between the teacher and student's pre-existing cultures puts the teacher into the dilemma of promoting either children-run or adult-run educational unilateralism as described by Matusov and Rogoff (2002). The dilemma is between whether to adopt the child's home culture over her own discomfort (i.e., to allow to the child to put his head down while the teacher talks to him) – *or* to force the child to adopt her home culture over his discomfort (i.e., to demand, as the teacher in our case did, that the child looks directly at the teacher while she is speaking). The proponents of children-run unilateralism argue that school exists for children and not for the teacher and it is the teacher's obligation to make the students' learning as comfortable and effective as possible by making the teacher's instruction "culturally sensitive" (Bean, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2003; Rueda & Dembo, 1995; Rueda & Moll, 1994; Tharp, 1982). It is believed that the alternative would be to enforce the teacher's mainstream culture in the classroom and in turn, promote the *status quo* of educational, social, economic, and political inequalities.

The proponents of adult-run unilateralism argue that the students from non-mainstream and often economically and politically disadvantaged communities need to learn how to successfully navigate and operate in mainstream institutions that White middle-class teachers represent. Accommodating to the students' home cultures and not teaching the mainstream ways of doing things can potentially do a lot of disservice to the students, their future, and to their communities at large. In the view of adult-run unilateralism proponents, if school is committed to social justice, it should focus on directly teaching the "master's tools" to students from disadvantaged communities

(Delpit, 1995; Ogbu, 2003). Finding any compromise between the children- and adult-run unilateralisms is especially difficult in such cases like eye contact or dialogic turn taking or ways of talking and thinking since it is difficult if not impossible to do two (or more) "ways of doing things" at once or even in alternation (Heath, 1983; Kaplan, 1966; Michaels & Cazden, 1986; Philips, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993).

It appears that both children- and adult-run unilateralisms are unsatisfactory. The children-run unilateralism disregards the comfort of the teacher and the teacher's culture and community and does not prepare students from disadvantaged communities for how to deal with the mainstream institutions in future. Adult-run unilateralism disregards the comfort of the student and his/her home community and his/her ways of being and learning, does not promote sensitive guidance, and accepts the power status quo. Also, although adult-run universalism can promote institutional success for some individual students from disadvantaged communities. It cannot promote success for an entire disadvantaged group as a whole because many mainstream institutional practices are based on competition and discrimination (i.e., "zero sum game" where success of one is failure of another) (De Lone, 1979; Labaree, 1997; Varenne & McDermott, 1998).

Applying Latour's (1987) framework that he developed in his study of science practice, the essentialist approach to culture can be called "ready-made culture" (Matusov, Pleasants, & Smith, 2003). It assumes that the cultures pre-exist each other and their mismatches cause interactional breakdowns similar to the described above. We define "interactional breakdown" similar to the field of family psychology (Helfer, 1987) as a dramatic event (Bakhtin, 1986; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1999) in which the smooth flow of interaction becomes impossible and participants are forced to shift their attention from their messages to the interaction itself and their relations (Matusov, St. Julien, & Hayes, 2005). The essentialist approach to culture (i.e., the "ready-made culture" approach) assumes that cultures and cultural differences pre-exist the interaction and cause the breakdowns.

We have found several problems with the "ready-made" essentialist approach to culture. First, as we already mentioned, it does not guide educators what to do with cultural mismatches because both unilateral solutions (and even their combination and/or alternation) are not satisfactory. Second, the essentialist approach cannot explain why cultural mismatches sometimes do not automatically produce interactional breakdowns. Third, the essentialist ready-made cultural approaches cannot explain the emergence of new cultures and cultural dynamics in general. Finally, it cannot explain the phenomenon of why, under a careful historical analysis, any culture and cultural practice is never a monolith and, on a close look, consists of many cultures that it is incorporated in past (like any language or authorship of any text).

## Dialogic Framework to Cultural Breakdowns

In order to develop an alternative non-essentialist approach to interactional breakdowns in the classroom, we have turned to the existing literature and educational practices for insights. We specifically were attracted to the literature that talks about relational rather than essentialist nature of interactional breakdowns.

We found important insights of why differences in cultural practices may not be responsible for interactional breakdowns. Bateson (1987) criticized the classical notion of information (more exactly, the smallest unit of information) developed by Turing, Weaver, and Shannon, the main founders of the cybernetics, as any difference codified as 0 and 1 in the computer language. Bateson argued that information should be defined as "difference that makes a difference" (Bateson, 1987: 381) – one difference in objects is not enough for emergence of information (it is possible to find similar ideas in Mead, 1956 who defined the notion of "meaning" as

subject's reaction to the action of others). The other difference is the difference in subjects that the first difference in objects produces on the participants. Thus, according to Bateson, any information is always objectively subjective. Without the participants making an active response to the difference in the object, there is no information. Information is always mediated by human relations for a difference in objects to become information for humans.

Applying this idea to interactional breakdowns in the classroom, we can say that, although a difference in ways of doing things is necessary precursor for interactional breakdowns (one difference), it is not sufficient for causing a breakdown. The breakdown is constituted by the active response of the participants to this difference. In our South African case, the response of the participants was in the Afrikaans teacher's efforts to make the student look at her while she was talking to him (e.g., "sweety," "Look at me!," "nobody's going to shout at you") and in the Sotho boy's actions of putting his head even more down as the teacher talks to him. The Afrikaans teacher and the Sotho boy together co-construct "the second difference" (in Bateson's terms) that together with "the first difference" in their ways of doing things (i.e., relational difference in their behavior when the teacher looks at the boy when speaking while he is not) constitutes an interactional breakdown event.

Another big insight that became a part of the title of our article came from work of the Soviet philosopher Bakhtin who made an important statement defining culture as boundary and relationship,

> One must not...imagine the realm of culture as some sort of spatial whole, having boundaries but also having internal territory. The realm of *culture has no internal territory*: it is entirely distributed along the boundaries, boundaries pass everywhere, through its every aspect, the systematic unity of culture extends into the very atoms of cultural life, it reflects like the sun in each drop of that life. Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries: in this is its seriousness and its significance; abstracted from boundaries, it loses its soul, it becomes empty, arrogant, it disintegrates and dies. (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1999, 301)

Bakhtin's revolutionary statement suggests that it is not difference in cultures that creates interactional breakdowns but, conversely, interactional breakdowns constitute boundaries and create cultures. This seems to mean that "culture" is a certain interpretative frame (among other possible interpretative frames) that is used to manage interactional breakdowns in a certain way. Let's consider an example to illustrate this point.

I may notice that when I talk with another person, the person moves toward me. He makes me uncomfortable and aware of the situation so I move back from the person. The person keeps moving toward me while we are talking and I keep moving back, away from him. I can make several plausible interpretations about this situation. For example, I can think that the person is power hungry and tries to dominate me by violating my private space. Or I can think that the person is probably shortsighted and needs to move closely to see me better. Or I can think that the person violates my private space to rob me. Or I can think that the person cannot hear me well. Or I can think that the person wants to tell me something private. Or I can think that the person is sexually attracted to me and tries to make an advance. Or, finally (among many more other possibilities) I can think that the person comes from "another culture." By "another culture," I mean that we belong to different stable social groups systematically practicing different norms for proximity (Rogoff, 2003). Each of my listed interpretations affords different possible actions and relational stances toward the person in response to my interpretation: to run away, to fight, to call the police, to move closer, to look at the person sexually, to respect the person, to stop the interaction, to hate the person, to like the person, to blame the person, to give advice, to negotiate our common space, to

ask the person why they are coming closer to me, and so on. Thus, seeing our interactional breakdown as cultural calls for certain expectations and negotiation on my part.

Using "culture" as an interpretative frame for an interactional breakdown also implies that in future I should expect similar and other types of breakdowns on a regular basis not only with this person and me but between any person from his/her community and my community. Notice that my and his/her communities are also defined through the breakdowns. Similarly, in the case of "Look at me," Afrikaans and Sotho communities are defined through interpretation of many different interactional breakdowns in the past and anticipation of many more breakdowns in future. When interactional breakdowns cease to continue or cease to be recognized as cultural or cease to be expected, cultural and communal boundaries disappear together with the cultures and communities themselves ("culture has no internal territory"). That is why the notions of culture and community are so illusive and non-essential. When anthropologists crossed all definitions of what it means to be "French" circulating among French nationalists in Canada, they got nothing in common (Linger, 1994). However, even though that the "French" distinction has nothing in common in definition, this does not mean that the French-non-French distinction does not have real – social, economic, political, and psychological – consequences for people in Canada.

Using Bakhtin's framework, it is possible to say that Canadian Frenchness emerges from interactional breakdowns and interpretative frames even though these frames may not be always consistent and coherent with each other, as the anthropologists have shown. Similarly, being an immigrant in the United States from the Soviet Union, I (Eugene Matusov, the first author) was recognized as a "Jew" in the USSR (and still in Russia when I visit it) and as a "Russian" in the United States. I am "essentially the same" but my boundaries are constituted by interactional breakdowns with others are

different in the United States and in the USSR/Russia.

Boundaries constituting cultures and communities are not static but rather relational, dynamic, conflictual, and communicative. In other words, boundaries are dramatic and dialogic,

> If we had not talked with others and they with us, we should never talk to and with ourselves . . . Through speech a person dramatically identifies with potential acts and deeds, he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in *a contemporaneously created drama.* The mind emerges. (Dewey, 1925, 170)

Thus, "culture" is a certain dramatic dialogic discourse about dramatic events of interactional breakdowns. From a dialogic perspective, it is impossible to avoid breakdowns in human relations. The issue becomes how to manage these breakdowns in a better educational way. The dialogic approach is based on the key premise that the teacher cannot and should not solve the breakdown in a *unilateral* way (i.e., only by the teacher) but rather through a collaborative dialogue (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1999). From the dialogic perspective, the question of "what should I, as the teacher, do in case of an interactional breakdown" is a trap into unilateralism (cf. Mayo, 2000). Furthermore, a teacher's submission or passive accommodation to the students' ways of doing things in response to interactional breakdown over and above the needs of the teacher or others in the classroom or the classroom environment more generally would be a form of children-run unilateralism.

In past we developed a dualistic approach to the notion of "culture" (Matusov, Pleasants, & Smith, 2003) based on the dualistic approach to science developed by Latour (1987). Latour argues that there are two mutually related views of science practice: ready-made-science and science-in-action. The ready-made-science perspective, familiar from many depictions in popular and scientific literature, describes the past of science as the established product of past
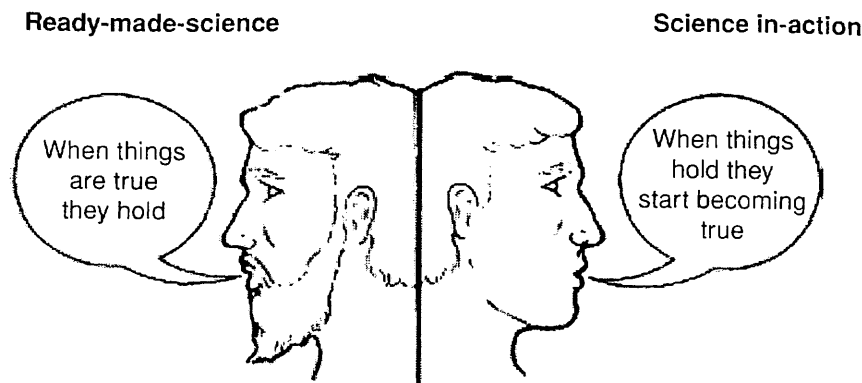
Figure 22.1. Double-face Janus of science (Latour, 1987: 12).

activity (illustrated by the "old face" with the beard on Figure 22.1). It describes science practice as the process of discovery of pre-existing facts. In contrast, science-in-action describes the present practice of science as the unfolding process of active negotiation of the consequences of the actions of the scientists (illustrated with the "young face" without a beard on Figure 22.1),

The "old face" of ready-made-science would say, "When the truth is achieved people become convinced." The "young face" of the science-in-action would reply, "When relevant people become convinced, things start becoming true." Now, Latour argues that the process of "convincing relevant people" is not simply a matter of following some criteria or methodology of science, as positivists and some recent US politicians believe, or of some group conformity processes, as some psychologists may suggest, but rather itself a complex, hybrid practice cycle involving many institutions as within as outside of the science itself (Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1979).

Latour argues that these two perspectives are both needed because it is impossible to move forward in science practice (i.e., science-in-action) without assuming that certain devices work and certain "true" statements exist that do not generate controversies among relevant participants (i.e., ready-made-science). A statement from one "face" becomes unproductive, if not plainly wrong, when it actuated within the realm of the other "face." When, on the one hand, any well-established statement and any work-

ing device are challenged, the science-in-action perspective is unproductively shifted into the realm of ready-made-science (as it often occurs in the US political contemporary debates about teaching the theory of evolution versus teaching about "intelligent design" in US public schools). When, on the other hand, a scientific statement and any device in question are viewed as a discovery of pre-existing truth, the ready-made-science perspective is unproductively entered into the realm of science-in-action (as it has occurred in classic positivism). As Latour and Woolgar painstakingly show in their sociological research of a biology lab, the ideology of ready-made science portraying the science as a process of discovery of preexisting truth does not describe or guide well the scientific process of truthmaking-in-action. The latter is exactly what we see as a problem in education dealing with the issue of cultural differences in the classroom. In the classroom, cultures are in making that is why a ready-made approach to culture is not useful and often counter-productive.

Similarly to Latour, Matusov, Pleasants, and Smith (2003) argue that when we describe the stable use of a cultural interpretative frame for recursive interactional breakdowns, the traditional ready-made-culture perspective is useful. However, when we are interested in describing cultural dynamics or prescribe designs for a "new culture" (cf. in Spanish "la cultura vivida," Moll, 2000: 256), the dialogic culture-in-action perspective should be used (Figure 22.2).
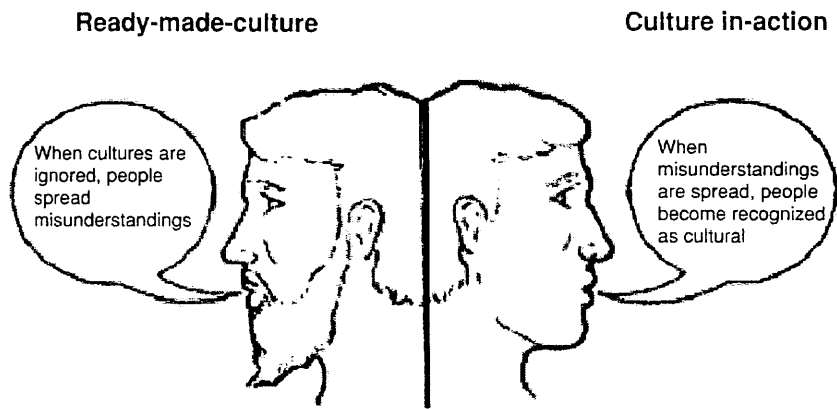
**Ready-made-culture** **Culture in-action**



Figure 22.2. Double-face Janus of culture: Dualistic approach to culture based on pragmatic relativism.

This new dualistic,[1] pragmatically relativistic, approach to human phenomena emerged in a dialogic opposition to essentialism. In our view, an essentialist approach often makes two mutually related errors. The first error is to assume that anything that is not firmly rooted in its material object (e.g., a social construction) cannot be truth. However, as we have discussed above, from the fact that there is nothing in common in the definitions of French made by different French Canadian nationalists, it does not mean that French ethnicity does not exist in Canada. A social construction can be as real as a material object – it can kill, it can cure, it can provide resources.

The second error of essentialism is to assume that truth is always and fully grounded in its object. For example, an essentialist would probably claim that the fact that the Roman numeral system is a cultural artifact is *solely* rooted in the way how ancient Romans quantified their practices (i.e., an essentialist definition of culture is "a way of doing things in a community"). However, we argue that the Roman numeral system can be recognized as cultural only when there is a breakdown of translation from another numeral system, for example, Arabic. In other words, its culture-ness and artifact-ness comes as a surplus of encountering another numeral system in addition to how ancient Roman quantified their practices. When, for example, it is written on my TV screen that Stanley Kubrick's movie Spartacus was produced in MDCD, I do

not understand "when exactly" the movie was produced. For me, the Roman number MDCD is not woven into network of historical and (auto)biographical events like Arabic numbers are. After consulting Internet website, I have to translate the Roman number into Arabic using a formula: $M = 1000, D = 500, CD = 400, 1000 + 500 + 400 = 1960$. The Arabic number 1960 is woven into my network of chronologically organized historical and (auto)biographical events so I know "when exactly" the movie Spartacus was produced (e.g., I, the first author, was born in 1960, so the movie Spartacus is as old as I am). Without the breakdown requiring a translation, the Roman numerical system is not cultural but "the way of counting" – the ancient Romans did not need to translate their numbers but perceived them directly within their networks of quantitative practices. For the ancient Romans, their numeral system was *the* numeral system and not the *Roman* numeral system. The qualifier "Roman" comes only after the two numeral systems met together and required translation. Bakhtin made a similar point, "There used to be a school joke: the ancient Greeks did not know the main thing about themselves, that they were *ancient* Greeks, and they never called themselves that. But in fact that temporal distance that transformed the Greeks into *ancient* Greeks had an immense transformational significance: it was filled with increasing discoveries of new *semantic* values in antiquity, values of which the Greeks were in fact unaware, although *they*

themselves created them" (Bakhtin, 1986, 6).[2] Similarly, ancient Romans were probably unaware of the conventional and constructionist nature of their numeral system that they *created* (rather than *discovered*).

The essentialist approach is a ready-made approach and as such it can be very useful. Speaking metaphorically, when one reads a novel, one should see only the novel's characters, their deeds, and relations and not the sentences, words or letters or punctuation signs that help the characters emerge in the reader mind. Focus on the sentences, words, letters, and punctuation signs, would easily distract the reader from the character and, thus, from the novel itself. When one is dealing with stable practices it makes sense to see their culture-ness solely in its object. When a modern person sees the Roman number XXIV, he or she recognizes the pattern of $10 + 10 + (5 - 1) = 24$ as if the pattern is solely rooted in the Roman number and not in an interaction between the Roman and Arabic numeral systems. Switching the attention to this interaction may distract the one's attention from comprehension of what the Roman number XXIV is "really means." A ready-made approach reifies translations and relations among practices and people in the object. This reification (or "blackboxing" in Latour's terms) is not an error or an illusion, as some constructivists claim, but a pragmatically useful strategy to manage our attention in an activity (Wenger, 1998). The useful and necessary strategy of reification transforms into an error of essentialism only when it is treated as the reality in addressing dynamic processes and unstable practices and relations. However, we argue that for education often dynamic processes, unstable practices and relations are in the center focus of the educators.

Clifford calls for a new view of culture-in-action in anthropology based on dialogic translation of "conjunctions" ("borders" in Bakhtin's terms or "breakdowns" in our terms).

> The anthropology I have in mind is no longer part of a unified "science of man," a science which sorted out the world's cultures, synchronically and diachronically, from a privileged standpoint at the end, or cutting edge of history. Rather I want to affirm another strand of anthropology which points toward more tentative, dialogical, but still realist, ethnographic histories: a work of translation which focuses not so much on cultures as on conjunctures, on complex mediations of old and new, of local and global (Clifford, 2000, 97).

According to the culture-in-action perspective, "*cultures*" are a dialogically recognized[3] pattern [a frame] of dramatic breakdowns that have temporal and spatial stability, heterogeneity, and synchronicity (among probably other features). To be viewed as "*cultural*," the breakdowns have to have temporal stability because they are recognized and expected to occur on a recursive basis. When breakdowns do not reoccur on a systematic basis, they cannot be viewed as "*cultural*." For example, from a fact that I did not understand a person only one time, I probably won't jump to a conclusion that my lack of understanding is due to a cultural difference between us. Similarly, they have to occur between certain stable social groups to be seen as "*cultural*"; otherwise breakdowns would be interpreted probably in personal, non-cultural terms. For example, systematic breakdowns of translations of feet into inches for some people are not seen as "*cultural*" because these breakdowns are not systematically distributed across different social groups. However, systematic breakdowns across meters and feet can be seen as "*cultural*" – American versus European – because different social groups use different measure systems causing breakdowns. Cultural explanations of breakdowns become stronger when there are diverse breakdowns that have the same temporal and spatial stability. In other words, when different types of breakdowns (e.g., in language, in eye contact, in personal space) systematically occur with the same two groups, it becomes easier to view them as "*cultural*" rather when only one type of breakdown systematically occurs between two groups. Otherwise, the differences may be too idiosyncratic and too difficult to discriminate as "*cultural*"

within complex, ongoing social interactions. For example, breakdowns causing by some people's snoring in others, who can't sleep because of the snoring, more unlikely be seen as "*cultural*" than breakdowns caused by deafness or blindness. Deafness and blindness create much more comprehensive and heterogeneous system of breakdowns to constitute distinctive cultures (Mudgett-DeCaro, 1996) than snoring (at least for the historical "*now*"). Finally, when breakdowns occur systematically in the same time (synchronously) for the participants, the breakdowns can be viewed as "*cultural.*" However, when breakdowns occur systematically in different time (diachronically) for the participants, especially for the same group of people, the breakdowns can be viewed as "*historical*" (i.e., the boundary between "*the present*" and "*the past*" is created). For example, the "striking difference" in bodily proximity of male friends on US photos in the 19th century and in the second part of the 20th century is viewed as a "*historical change*" in US male intimacy in the context of male friendship (Deitcher, 2001).

Instead of viewing the interactional and relational breakdowns as communicational nuisances that should be avoided, minimized, or repaired in the classroom, the culture-in-action approach views the relational breakdowns as sites of many opportunities for dialogue and for co-constructing new ways of participating with each other (i.e., genuine teaching and learning, Mayer-feld Bell, 1998). Through this dialogue a "*new culture*" of the classroom community (i.e., a new communal way of communicating and doing things) can emerge. We will offer the notion of "creole community" as a collaborative way of solving cultural breakdowns (Matusov & Hayes, 2002; Matusov, Pleasants, & Smith, 2003; Matusov, St. Julien, & Hayes, 2005). We will illustrate the dialogic approach by providing examples from how a Black South African teacher in the same school (cited as the Black Teacher interviewed above) dialogically deals with breakdowns in his classroom and how the first author dealt with relational breakdowns in his undergraduate classroom for preservice teachers.

## Building "Creole Communities" in Education

Here we consider how "creole communities" emerge and how the teacher guides and, to a certain degree, designs this emergence. We follow the definition of "creole community" developed by Matusov, St. Julien, and Hayes (2005: 3): "We refer to the notion of 'community' to emphasize mutual solidarity and affinity among the participants" (Cole, 1996; Durkheim, 1966). We use the term 'creole' to refer to a holistic community where boundaries between diverse and distinguished cultural groups are neither fully erased nor fully maintained. This creole community is united yet preserves the diversity of participants' cultures, backgrounds, immediate and long-term goals, values, and so on." We argue that successful teachers often develop creole communities in their classrooms in response to perceived interactional and communicational breakdowns instead of using an essentialist perspective of pre-existing cultures.

Our following analysis of an educational practice building creole communities reveals that when the teacher is faced with and recognized a recursive interactional breakdown, instead of asking him or herself the question "how can I solve it?," the teacher seems to attempt to share the problem with the students in a public forum. By engaging the students with the problem, the teacher avoids the trap of unilateralism inherent in the essentialist ready-made-culture approaches. The teacher does not just state the perceived problem to the students but also often explores the negative consequences of the problem as it affects or would affect their joint life in the classroom. The teacher works hard to makes sure that all the students understand the problem and its consequences, perceive it as important and serious, and accept as their own through their response to the teacher's bid for having the presented problem as their shared problem. The teacher also makes clear that the solution of the shared problem is impossible without the students' and the teacher's active participation. By this process

of sharing the problem with the students, the teacher creates a new, problem-based solidarity in the classroom.

This problem-based solidarity is organized around the realization by all members of a group (not necessarily a community yet) that they are all engaged in the same problem, the solutions for which depend on coordinated efforts by all members of the group. This type of solidarity around a common problem is very different than solidarity around a common vision, oppositional solidarity or cooperative solidarity based on division of labor because, unlike in those types of solidarity, the problem-based solidarity does not require any consensus about the organization of the community that preexists the participants' commitment to the new community (Durkheim, 1966; Fullan, 1993; Matusov, 1999; Matusov, St. Julien, & Hayes, 2005; Matusov & White, 1996; Sherif, 1988). Such common vision of some practice, or common opposition to somebody or something, or a division of labor that preexists the community, upon which the community is based, and, to some extent, are "above the community" and above the individual members being a rigid structure precluding full negotiation of the community practice and relations. Solidarity based on a shared problem is rooted in each individual member's needs and their realization of a co-dependency in addressing these needs. For the problem-based solidarity to start forming, the participants do not even need to agree fully with each other about the definition of the problem or its solution – but only on the fact that they have a common problem and that its solution depends on active participation of all members of the group (this group may not necessarily be considered a "community" yet). The shared problem creates a "boundary object" (Star & Griesemer, 1989) or "interobjectivity" (Latour, 1996) or "intersubjectivity without agreement" (Matusov, 1996) that coordinates all the participants. The problem-based solidarity allows the participants to participate legitimately and actively in the mutual process of goal defining.

Below we consider two examples of a teacher building creole communities. In both cases, the teacher shared the problem of the breakdown with the students, the students responding by accepting the problem as legitimate and important and sharing ownership of the problem. In both cases, the teacher discussed consequences of the problem with the students and they negotiated a solution together. In the first example, the teacher identified the shared problem and suggested the "solution" which (although it does not work) triggers a new problem-based solidarity and a new practice in the classroom that helps to address the problem. In the second example, a new practice emerges in the classroom as a result of the teacher's discussion of the shared problem without any suggestion for a solution.

### *"Please Try to Listen to Each Other"*

In the same South African school that we described above, we videotaped a few lessons taught by very experienced Black science teacher Mr. Moyo who was born, raised, and got his teacher education in Zimbabwe (the same Black Teacher cited in the interview above). In this particular economics lesson at the beginning of the new school year, Mr. Moyo wanted to discuss with his seventh grade students what things should be considered a "need," a "means," or a "want." About 40 students in the rather small classroom were sitting in several long rows facing the blackboard. He posed the question to his students, "What things would you identify as needs?" They brainstormed and volunteered ideas (such as "education," "air," "shelter," "sunlight," "God," "money," "food," "love," "transportation"), which Mr. Moyo wrote on the blackboard for further discussion. Then he focused the students on each item listed on the blackboard to get a consensus if it is not a "need" or a "want." As soon as Mr. Moyo noticed any disagreement among the students, he asked the opponents to elaborate on their opinion and the rest of the class to judge their reasoning until a class consensus was reached. Sometimes he asked guiding questions to the students or

offered comments to make the students' reasoning more evident for themselves and the rest of the class. The class worked in a certain rhythm, alternating between discussing issues at hand among a group of classmates around them and presenting their ideas to the teacher and the whole class. According to our videotaped observation, all students, without exception, actively and sometimes very passionately participated in the discussions. We could not hear all discussions of the students because of "learning noise" (the teacher's term) – often the students talked about the class topic at once – but from their contributions that we could hear and their non-verbal behavior, we judged their high engagement in the lesson.

However, this class work was not without problems. The class discussions were not always "naturally" synchronized. At times when one student was ready to present a group idea to the teacher and the class and was allowed to take the class floor by the teacher, some other groups continued their heated discussions of the issues among themselves. Also, sometimes the students, attentively listening to a student addressing the whole class, split again into informal groups for discussions in reaction to a presented point even though the student having the class floor did fully not finish his point yet. In our eyes and eyes of the teacher, the weak public forum and public platform presented a serious threat to the effectiveness of the discussion and the lesson at large. We did not see any evidence that the students, themselves, were aware of the problem: they did not try to silence the class when they spoke publicly and did not try to silence each other when a student was speaking to the whole class. The teacher dealt with the problem recursively as the problem became more and more apparent in the teacher's eyes.

Mr. Moyo started discussing if "education" was "a need" or "a want." The students got really excited about this topic, with about half saying yes and about half saying no. Their voices rose and became louder, and they started talking at the same time, amongst themselves. Mr. Moyo had to tell them to raise their hands in order to get them to listen to one student at a time. After each student that Mr. Moyo called on spoke, there was a surge of agreements, disagreements, and comments from the other students in the class. Mr. Moyo called on one student who was raising his hand, but students were still talking to each other. He said, "Ah . . . Please try to listen. If you want to say something which is going to be heard by everyone, you must listen when others are speaking." This student then starts speaking again, and the class becomes silent, but about half way through what he was saying, the other students started discussing and talking to each other again. Mr. Moyo then looked out at the rest of the class and said, "Now . . . I think *we are having a problem here.* (Student's Name), you address yourself to the class." Again, the teacher's comment made the class silent and attentive to the student. Mr. Moyo seemed to move from an ad hoc dealing with the problem to a public recognition of the problem for the class. So far he still had full responsibility for solving the problem.

Mr. Moyo then turned back to the student, and started a new conversation with the class. He reaffirmed that the class should hear ideas from everybody and that the whole class should arrive at a consensus at the end. They started discussing whether "money" is an economic need or want for people and once again the students were getting excited and were all speaking at the same time. Mr. Moyo looked at the students and said, "Now remember . . . if you have to say something, you must make sure others are listening . . . if you just shout it, then you're just wasting your time." He pointed at a student who raised her hand and she could speak in silence. By making this move, the teacher apparently abandoned his attempts to solve the problem unilaterally by just attracting their attention to the problem. He provided two reasons for why the students should listen to each other: (1) to have a reciprocal obligation to listen to others if you want to be listened when you talk to the class and (2) to not waste time by shouting because no one can listen if everyone shouts. Up to now, it is possible to claim that the

problem remained unshared with the students despite the teacher's growing efforts to share the ownership for the problem with the students.

As they continued to discuss the money issue, some students were raising their hands while some were still shouting out what they wanted to say. When Mr. Moyo called on a student who raised his/her hand, the students were quiet as they were speaking. When the student was coming to the end of what he or she was saying, the rest of the class started talking all at once again in reaction to what was said. This seemed to be fine with the Mr. Moyo. This showed complexity of the problem because at certain time when the class floor was not occupied by any one speaker, splitting into small discussion groups was effective and legitimate in the teacher's eyes (as he pointed out in his post-lesson interview).

At some point, the teacher decided that the class had had enough small group discussions to generate a productive whole class discussion and he called on a student who was raising his hand and sitting in the first row (next to the teacher) and asked the class to listen to him, "Let's listen to him." The student tried to make a point that money is an economic need for people. To make this point, the student said that without enough money, a person has to rely on the government, which seemed to be bad according to the student. The class reacted on the student's point actively: some in disagreement and some in agreement. The noise grew again. Mr. Moyo asked the student: "Who is the government, by the way? Huh? Who is the government who is supposed to give you shelter, who is supposed to give you food...?" (friendly, smiling at student). Student responded (through the class noise) by that the government is the people. Mr. Moyo turned to the entire class: "I suppose you heard what he said." Many students replied, "Nooo...." Mr. Moyo told to the class: *"It was a good point. What? You say 'no'? Why? You were talking...it's not a bad thing, to talk...the main thing is that you all listen. He said a good point here."* Mr. Moyo looked at the class with surprise and confusion. He

showed them that he was confused that they did not hear, because they should have if they were quiet when others were talking; he also recognized that the reason they did not hear was because they were talking to each other at the same time. Again, the class became quiet. One student asked, "What did he say?" The student repeated and several students raised their hands in response – it was clear that the students agreed with the teacher that the student's point was really good and important (although they might disagree with it). More students began raising their hands to get the class floor at this moment and one more time the students could hold the class floor in silence while the others were listening. We also noticed that the students lowered their hands when they actively listened to the classmates taking the class floor. Sometimes they raised their hands again and sometimes they did not immediately do so after the classmate finished speaking to the class. Although, we could not rule out completely the possibility that the students simply and unconditionally complied with the teacher's request to be silent during a classmate's talk to the entire class, we found it difficult to use compliance as the sole explanation for the changes in the students' behavior we observed since their compliance was conditional and situational involving their own judgment. It was much more plausible to explain the students' new behavior by their understanding and acceptance of the new problem to listen to their classmates when they took the class floor.

The teacher continued his efforts to share the problem with the students and promote the value of listening to each other, especially when one student was talking to the entire class. It became evident that more and more students started visibly enjoying the whole class discussions as they more and more listen to each other. The teacher gave the students respect by telling them that what they were doing was not "bad thing" (i.e., talking), which also showed them that he liked that they discussed and conversed with one another. But at the same time he was showing them that they could miss some really good ideas and points, and that it was

important to listen to each other. As Mr. Moyo was saying, "the main thing is that you all listen. You missed a good point here," and the students became very quiet.

Guided by the teacher the class continued developing how to balance small group discussions, whole class discussions, listening, and giving a student the class floor. Mr. Moyo brought up the question, "What is money? Let's just try to get to understand, what is money?" One student answered, and when she was finished talking, all of the students started talking at the same time to each other, in agreement or disagreement with the student who just spoke. They were talking to each other about the question Mr. Moyo posed – what is money – and were voicing their ideas. Mr. Moyo stood and let the students discuss among themselves for about 15 seconds. He stood and watched, giving the students a chance to talk with each other. He then pulled them back to the lesson, saying "I don't know what you were all saying, a lot of people were talking here and unfortunately I only heard what she said. If you want to say something you are thinking, something which is in your mind, put up your hand like her so everyone can hear." As he was saying this, everyone was silent. And when he called on a girl to speak, the other students were quiet until she was finished. Then there was a wave of talking again – apparently discussing in small groups what she just said. Mr. Moyo did not try to interrupt their discussions.

We would consider this situation to be a type of interactional and relational breakdown because the constant talking while others were speaking was a problem for Mr. Moyo, a problem that he shared with his students. Moreover, each time he acknowledged the problem, there was a break in the flow of the lesson. However, this seems to be more of a "continuous" or "ongoing" breakdown, for it kept repeating. This was not one incident, rather it continued happening. It was the beginning of the year and Mr. Moyo was trying to establish the way he expected his students to interact with each other in class. The process started but was far from being finished. We wonder how long it would take for this issue to be resolved, or if it continued to be an issue. As the teacher told during his post-lesson interview, a big part of his curriculum at the beginning of the year with a new class of students was to build a learning community that had its own ways of regulating how students discuss learning issues in the class. Our observations of his other classes with students he worked with for a longer time suggested that he successfully solved similar breakdowns with his students in the past. However, even at the end of the lesson, new practices of communal self regulation such as the students' raising hands, becoming quieter, listening, lowering hands when a classmate took the floor, recognizing when it was time for small group discussion and when it was not, and so on became evident and took shape.

In Mr. Moyo's classrooms, we observed many breakdowns that were brought to a public forum. Many of them were recognized and publicized by the teacher but some were recognized and publicized by students. For example, in a lesson on measurement, a student was expressing a problem he had with something that the teacher was saying. The student brought to the teacher's attention that they were not sure what units were. The teacher then asked the students if they understood what he was saying. The students did not give Mr. Moyo a positive answer, rather they shook their heads and mumbled no. The teacher was apparently taken by surprise. Mr. Moyo was going on with his lesson and was not prepared for the students to have trouble with units. He had the assumption that his students knew what units were; they, on the other hand, were very unclear. Mr. Moyo then decided to change to something else so that they were "all in line," and asked the students if that were ok. The students showed that it was ok, and they all started discussing a different topic that was more familiar and a building block for understanding the unit of measurement. In this interaction, the students and the teacher worked through a problem together and made sure that everyone felt good about it. Mr. Moyo had to stop in the middle of what he was doing and what

he had planned, and think of something else to do with them on the spot. There was a breakdown in the lesson for about a minute when this was happening. Mr. Moyo then was able to change what he was doing and introduce something else that the students could relate to, in order to help them understand. The way he solved the issue and handled the student's confusion was successful; when he switched to something else, the students started participating more freely and answering his questions. By the end of their discussion, they were clearer on what units were. In a follow-up interview to us, Mr. Moyo was very pleased with this episode as the students become more responsible for their own learning and helped him better guide them. Student-initiated breakdowns are welcome in Mr. Moyo's classroom and recognized as important contributors for a development of a collaborative creole culture in the classroom.

## Doodling in the Classroom

This case was somewhat similar to the situation in which South African Afrikaans teacher faced when dealing with Sotho student who did not look at her while she was talking to him. In this case, the teacher was also uncomfortable with the student's behavior. The setting was a small seminar of 21 undergraduate students of the Elementary Teacher Education program on Cultural Diversity issues in teaching that involved a teaching practicum in afterschool program in a local Latin-American Community Center (see for detailed description of the similar class and program Matusov, St. Julien, & Hayes, 2005). The instructor, the first author of the paper (Eugene), noticed that one of the students named Anna was systematically drawing pictures during class discussions (one of the main instructional formats of this seminar). Although Anna seemed to follow the discussions and actively participate in them, the instructor felt distracted by her "doodling" (as she later called it). Anna clearly monitored the instructor's movements in the classroom and tried to move her drawing away when Eugene

came to her proximity. Other students also noticed the development and apparently were puzzled how to read it. Eugene felt as if the student did not like the classroom discussions and activities, was bored and tried to smuggle extracurricular activities in the classroom to entertain herself, a behavior not different from the resistant behavior of Black Caribbean girls in British classrooms described in Fuller (1984). For a while, Eugene did not make any attempt to stop Anna's drawing, waiting for the development of a stable and clear pattern of her ambivalent behavior: she seemed to acknowledge the illegitimacy of her drawing in the class but still continued drawing on a systematic basis (see also Corsaro and Johannesen, Chapter 21, this volume, for discussion of resistant behavior by students). Her cover up of the activity was also inconsistent: she moved the drawing away when Eugene was coming closer to her but she did not try to hide it when she knew that Eugene noticed her drawing from distance (she chose to sit at the most distant desk cluster from the instructor). Eugene did not know what to do: to change his guidance to be more responsive and sensitive to Anna's needs or to request Anna to stop her distracting drawing in the classroom. After about a month into the semester, the instructor decided to discuss the problem of his own discomfort with the entire class, posing it as a teaching dilemma. He asked the students what they would do if they noticed a student drawing pictures during lessons on a systematic basis in their future classroom when they become teachers.

As soon as everybody heard the question, they looked at Anna whose face became red. The instructor acknowledged that Anna was one of such students but the issue was not about Anna (which was only partially true) but about what the teacher should do. He offered the students what the teacher might think about the doodling student. Together they developed a list of the teacher's possible concerns including ones that the instructor (Eugene) had. Eugene shared his concerns about Anna's drawing distracting him from his instruction. Then the instructor said that

since the class had such a student, Anna, in the classroom, it was a good idea to ask her if it was true that she was bored, disinterested, inattentive, and tried to smuggle extracurricular activities to entertain herself. Anna explained that she was drawing pictures in the class because it helped her concentrate and prevent her from daydreaming. She said that she was a person who needed to multitask and keep her hands busy to stay focused. The instructor asked her why she was hiding her drawing when he was coming closer to her and she explained that she was not sure that her behavior bothered him or not and whether the instructor saw it as legitimate. She said that she got mixed nonverbal messages from him in past and was a bit nervous about how Eugene considered her behavior.

The classroom discussion went on about what the instructor should do in case of having in class a student like Anna and how to separate this case from another case when a student was not attentive and indeed smuggled an entertaining activity to class. Initially the class decided that since Anna's doodling was a distraction for Eugene, their instructor, and, hence, she should stop doodling. But then Eugene pointed out that her drawing indeed had been a distraction for him because he had been afraid that she doodled because of her disinterest in the subject and poor quality of his guidance. Since it was apparently not the case, he felt that Anna's doodling would be much less of a distraction for him, if at all, from now on. Besides, he continued, doodling helped Anna to concentrate and better participate in the lesson. The class reconsidered their decision and suggested that it might be okay for Anna to openly draw during the class discussions or the instructor's presentation. After the class, Anna posted on the class web the following message,

> I just wanted to thank Eugene for letting me know today that it's ok for me to doodle and draw in class. Since I was little, I have always needed to be doing something while I am sitting – whether it is in class or just watching TV. Some of my teachers in the past have thought it was rude, but it is not because I am bored

or not listening. In fact, like Eugene mentioned, it helps me concentrate and focus better. It is when I am not drawing that I stare out the window, ignore the teacher, daydream, or fall asleep. I think some teachers need to understand that there are many kids who need to multitask in order to stay focused. Thanks for understanding Eugene (Class webtalk, 10/10/2002).

It was interesting that it was not the case at all that the instructor allowed Anna to doodle in his classroom but rather she (and other students) interpreted their communal consensus that emerged in the class as being sanctioned by Eugene. Another student reinterpreted the event as if the instructor knew from the beginning the solution of the problem.

> I thought it was great that Eugene allowed for Anna to doodle in class today. Most teachers never really think out its effects, and automatically think it is a bad thing. For Anna though, this really is the opposite and doodling has a positive effect on her learning. It allows her to stay focused without shutting out everything else that is going on around her. I really think it is a good thing that Eugene looked at Anna's doodling and saw it as good influence on her learning (Class webtalk, 10/10/2002).

The fourth author of the paper, who was also a student for this class, remembered that she also thought that, from the beginning, Eugene knew that Anna's doodling was good for the students and developed a lesson around that rather than was trying to solve the problem in their classroom. This phenomenon has been described by Latour (Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1979) who noticed how quickly a "science-in-action" event was remembered by participating scientists as a "ready-made-science" event. An emergent collaborative, co-constructive dramatic event of legitimizing doodling in class was remembered as unilateral, preexisting, transmission of knowledge. This phenomenon represents a certain challenge for teacher education because it is apparent that the students did not recognize their

instructor's learning, classroom drama, problem sharing, and collaborative management of uncertainty.

As an important consequence of this dramatic event, however, a third student got an idea of how to use doodling for management of her own lack of attention in classes.

> You know what I think I am going to have to try the doodling thing. Sometimes I find it hard to pay attention in my classes, because it is so easy to get distracted. Maybe I should try the doodling and see if I am able to focus a little better. I was always afraid that someone would think that I wasn't paying attention if I doodled, but in class today, I realized that it is ok to doodle. I'll have to try it and see if it helps me any. (Class webtalk, 10/15/2002)

After the discussion a few students started bringing color markers for doodling. These students reflected on their use of doodling: whether and when it was distracting for them and when it was helpful. The doodling topic generated many fruitful discussions on cultural diversity in the classroom and on promoting sensitive guidance. The instructor found that doodling was not distractive at all when it had clear meaning for him. It was interesting that when the students had to interview children at the Latin-American Community Center (LACC) as a part of their course assignment, they found that offering the LACC children the opportunity to draw during the interviews helped the children to keep focused on the interview and not become tired too soon. Not only new classroom practices emerged from this event of instructor's sharing his pedagogical problem with his students, but also new classroom solidarity emerged. The new solidarity was evident in the fact that many students who did not have classes immediately after the class stayed together and continued arguing issues that we discussed in our class. As students wrote after the class.

> My favorite part about the class is that it is so open to everything – opinions, laughter, doodling, games, group work, parties, and so on we're not really a class

anymore – we're more like a group of friends. I see you girls at parties and walking to and from classes. I see mark all over campus and occasionally see Eugene on his way to Brew HaHa [campus café, Eugene's favorite place]. I think the level of comfort we have in the class really facilitates learning because we are not afraid to voice our opinions or ask questions, whether it be in class or on webtalk. (Class web, 12/15/2002)

## Instead of a Conclusion

Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995) argue that the only true interaction between the teacher and the students can be achieved through creation of "the third space" of classroom dialogue. They defined the first space as the monologic official discourse of the teacher, in which the students have a passive, peripheral, (or nonexistent) role. The second space is the students' space excluding or even counteracting the teacher. Both two spaces are unilateral. Although, Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson talk about the third space as being "in the middle ground" (p. 447), in our view, it is actually outside of the teacher-run versus student-run unilateral continuum (see Matusov & Rogoff, 2002; Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996 for more discussion of this point). A compromise or combination of the first and the second spaces does not create the third space. The third space has new relational and activity qualities involving mutuality, collaboration, and dialogue between the teacher and the students. Similarly, Bhabha (1994) describes third space as existing along borders and consisting of negotiation of "incommensurable differences." The third space generates a new approach to the relationship between the teacher and the students.

Similarly, the culture-in-action approach to interactional breakdowns is also based on the creation of mutuality, collaboration, and dialogue. When we asked Mr. Moyo, the South African science teacher, what he would do in the shoes of an Afrikaans teacher who apparently felt uncomfortable when some Black students did not establish

their eye contact with her while she was talking with them, Mr. Moyo told us that he would share his problem of discomfort with the students so that they together could discuss it and figure out what to do. Thus, the culture-in-action approach presupposes a symbolic "we" (i.e., "we will discuss and figure out *together*") even before an actual "we" has been built in the classroom. He rejected the unilateral solution guided by the ready-made-cultural perspective that traps the teacher in the unilateral continuum of "my culture" versus "their culture." The teacher's proleptic, taken-for-granted, "we" is aimed at designing a new creole community in the classroom. The teacher cannot, may not, and does not need to envision a solution for the perceived interactional breakdown on his own, in advance, without classroom dialogue with his students. Any attempt by the teacher to solve the problem of the breakdown leads to unilateralism and away from building a creole community in the classroom.

We hypothesize, although without having any direct data yet, that a creole classroom community cannot be self-contained and limited to the classroom walls. A new emerging classroom culture can affect both the teacher's institutional mainstream culture and the students' home cultures. Participation in a creole culture probably forces its members to negotiate new and old ways of doing things in other communities in which they participate. For example, the students of Mr. Moyo may bring their newly emerging skills and practices of listening to each other in other classrooms with other teachers in the school that may (or may not) disrupt the teachers' ways of doing things and lead to new interactional and relational breakdowns. These possible breakdowns, in their own turn, may lead to fruitful (or confrontational) teachers' discussions about the nature of the breakdowns and how to solve them at the teacher lounge with Mr. Moyo (or without him), which again may (or may not) affect school policy and culture at large. Similar ripple effects can occur at the students' homes and even at Mr. Moyo's home. This plausible hypothesis of an emerging

creole classroom culture having a ripple-effect awaits a new investigation.

Another hypothesis is about students' meta-learning in the third space – the students' learning how to promote the third space in future with different communities by themselves. We call this learning "meta-learning" because it is "above" ("meta" in Greek) students' regular learning, for it is important relational learning of how to participate in a genuine classroom dialogue and in a newly developed creole classroom culture. Does students' socialization in the third space of classroom public dialogue about a shared problem, emerging from interactional breakdowns promoted by the teacher, guide the students how to promote the third space with other people in their future relationships? Can a creole community within the third space, within a space of actively making culture-in-action, reproduce itself through its members (i.e., students)? So far, we have negative evidence for that. Recall please that Eugene's undergraduate students apparently did not recognize their collaborative solution of the "doodling" breakdown and believed that Eugene had had the "good" solution from the beginning. They did not seem to recognize the process of culture-in-action but saw ready-made-culture (like many scientists in Latour's and Woolgar's study of a science bio lab could see only ready-made-science in their past science-in-action practice Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1979). It can be that, like Latour's scientists, Eugene's preservice teachers have a gap between their espoused and in-action theories (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Maybe as teachers, through socialization in the third space organized by Eugene in their class, his students have learned how to promote genuine dialogue about interactional breakdowns in their future classrooms (even though, they may describe the process differently, in ready-made terms, afterwards). Alternatively, socialization in the third space can lead to meta-learning about how to promote it overtime – Eugene's students might not simply have enough time to be socialized in their new creole classroom culture in order to meta-learn how to promote creole

cultures by themselves. Finally, it can be that socialization itself is not enough for meta-learning the third space and students have to learn how to promote the third space and culture-in-action in their own future classrooms through specially designed instruction and curricula. Future research can resolve this issue.

Our study contributes in elaboration on how the third space can be created by the teacher in the classroom through transformation of interactional breakdown into a shared *ontological* problem for the entire classroom. Since breakdowns disrupt the flow of interaction and relations between the teacher and the students (or among students sometimes as well), the problems they potentially can generate are not just intellectual but ontological – involving the participants' "whole-person" commitment, action, and ethical deeds here and now. The participants cannot simply "walk out" from their breakdown (their "inaction" is also a certain action as it is evident from Eugene's initial attempts to "overlook" Anna's doodling and from Anna's and the classmates' making sense of the act of the teacher's "overlooking") as it is possible in purely intellectual problems. We may hypothesize here that the theme of the third space (i.e., genuine classroom dialogue) is always involved shared ontological problems. Some of these shared ontological problems can come from interactional breakdowns and some (like, for example, in study by Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995) can come from other sources (e.g., deep relevancy and high urgency of the academic topic for the students). It is possible to argue that dialogic pedagogy (Matusov, 2004) of the third space is based on a teacher-designed process of "sharing," "problematizing," and "ontologizing" the socially desired academic curricula (cf. Lave, 1992).

## Notes

1    Elsewhere we discussed Latour's and our own use of the term "dualism" (Matusov, Pleasants, & Smith, 2003). In contrast to Descartes' essentialist dualism, our dualism is pragmatic (i.e., goal-oriented) and relative (i.e., based on an observer). Descartes' dualism was essentialist because it was unconditional: humans are half-machines, half-soul. Similarly, we argue that Vygotsky's dualism was essentialist because it was unconditional: human development is intertwine of the natural and the cultural or intertwine of psychological and social (Matusov, 1998). In contrast, our dualism is conditional, "Our dualistic approach to the notion of culture, like Latour's approach to science and quantum physics' approach to electrons, is relativistic because it heavily depends on the observer's research focus. However, these relativistic approaches are also *pragmatically relativistic* because they focus on most useful descriptive models – on the purpose of the observer – and abandon the question of 'what is really true' understood outside of pragmatics of human activity. Electron is both a particle and a wave. Culture is both ready-made and in-action" (Matusov, Pleasants, & Smith, 2003).

2    It is possible to claim that ancient Greeks in their early historical phase did not know even that they were *Greeks* in our modern sense as a name of ethnos. The etymology of the Greek work "barbarians" suggests that it comes from phonetic mimicking of incomprehensible speech of foreigners, "bar-bar-bar-bar" (similarly the Slavic work for German "немец" coming from "немой" literally means "mute"). This implies that ancient Greeks saw only themselves as fully human, which what the word *Greek* was probably meant for them.

3    As Said (1979: 54) pointed out correctly, this discursive recognition of the breakdowns can be unilateral, "A group of people living on a few acres of land will [arbitrary] set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call 'the land of the barbarians'....I use the word 'arbitrary' here because imaginative geography of the 'our land-barbarian land' variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction." However, despite the discursive unilateralism – its objectivization and finalization of "the barbarian others", – it also addresses the others, provokes their response, and involves them in the discourse and, thus, although possibly unwillingly, becomes dialogic.

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