ROUTLEDGE

Frame Analysis, Critical Theory, and English Language Teaching

ROBERT J. LOWE

FRAME ANALYSIS, CRITICAL THEORY, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In this book, Robert J. Lowe introduces frame analysis, a qualitative research approach grounded in the critical theory of the early Frankfurt School and framing in the social sciences. Lowe sets out the principles of the frame analysis approach and provides a guide to conducting this kind of research in practice.

Focused on identifying and challenging ideology through immanent critique, Lowe presents a methodological guide and research report. He begins by explaining early critical theory and the frame analysis approach, followed by a detailed example of its application. This example illustrates the key stages: identifying participants' ideological presuppositions through their "master framing," questioning the internal logic of this framing, and presenting contradictions to participants. Finally, the researcher observes reactions and documents emerging counter-framing, marking the first signs of resistance to dominant ideology.

By applying this approach to issues in English language teaching, the book questions some of the ways in which the rhetoric of pluralism and diversity around English as an international language may stand at odds with the realities of a world in which some varieties of the language have more prestige than others. Through the frame analysis approach, the author suggests that researchers can play a role in empowering language learners and users to advocate for a world in which they can take true ownership of the language. Key reading for all qualitative researchers and advanced students in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, ELT/TESOL and linguistic anthropology.

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INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Goals and structure

Introduction

This book is about the foundations and methods of critical research in English language teaching (ELT), and in it I seek to answer two questions: (1) what does it mean to do critical research in English language education; and (2) how can I, as a qualitative researcher, take a critical approach to my work? These questions have been discussed at length in the literature on critical ELT; however this book represents an attempt to answer them in a different way, both theoretically and methodologically. The first part of the book contains an in-depth theoretical exploration of an approach to critical research based on early Frankfurt School critical theory, and particularly the work of the philosopher and sociologist Max Horkheimer. Drawing on this theoretical base, a method for carrying out critical qualitative work termed *frame analysis* is discussed and developed, with a focus on how this can be employed in critical research in applied linguistics and language education. Following this theoretical discussion, the second part of the book draws on data from a critical qualitative study conducted with teacher trainees at a Japanese university to highlight the practical applications of this framework in the analysis and presentation of research data. This book has emerged from two of my ongoing concerns as a critical researcher in ELT. The first of these is a drive to understand exactly what I mean by defining myself as a "critical" scholar, while the second is related to my attempts to develop a method of critical qualitative inquiry which would reflect this theoretical orientation. In answering these questions, a research method emerged which I believe will be of use to other critical researchers who share my theoretical sympathies.

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Defining the "critical" in critical research

The first of the questions I hope to answer here is one that I have taken a great interest in over the last few years. While initially considering myself to be a member of a group defined by what appeared to be a common agenda focused on conducting research from a politically involved point of view, it gradually became clear that there were numerous disagreements and inconsistencies among my colleagues who identified with the same "critical" label. While critical researchers share a common interest in social justice, the theoretical assumptions and beliefs that justify this interest can be rather divergent and at times even incommensurate. While there are certain consistencies in the work of critical scholars in terms of interests, topics of research, and political orientations, there are also radical differences with the regards to the ontological and epistemological beliefs and perspectives which inform each research agenda. I soon came to understand that under the broad label of "critical applied linguistics", there are many schools of thought, several of which are at least partially at odds with one another. This led me into an ongoing exploration of what I mean when I say that my work is "critical".

Many scholars have discussed the different conceptions of criticality within the field of ELT (see Kayi-Aydar, 2024; Pennycook, 2001; 2021 for examples). As a qualitative researcher who has written extensively on critical issues, particularly those related to native-speakerism in ELT (see Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2021; Lowe, 2020; 2022; 2023; 2024; in press; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016; 2021; Lowe & Lawrence, 2018; Lowe & Pinner, 2016), I felt it important to establish a robust theoretical perspective within which to conceptualize my work. I initially wrote from what could be broadly characterized as a post-structuralist perspective, in which I attempted to interrogate concepts such as the 'native speaker'/'non-native speaker' binary so prevalent in the field (following Holliday [2005], I place these terms in inverted commas to indicate that they are contested), with the goal of deconstructing these notions and thus challenging their power. In so doing, I believed it would be possible to gradually improve working conditions in the field and actualize greater levels of equality for teachers. However, over time I began to feel that this approach was inadequate. I became concerned with the grounding of this perspective, and the justifications I could offer in support of this approach to critical work. I wondered how to integrate my focus on "native"/"non-native" issues with other critical concerns, and with social theory more broadly. In attempting to come to terms with these questions, I began to investigate various uses of the term "critical" in research, and this led to an ongoing exploration of literature on and by the Frankfurt School of post-Marxist critical social theory (see Geuss, 1981; Held, 1980, for overviews of Frankfurt School critical theory), with a specific focus on the version developed by Max Horkheimer (see Horkheimer, 1993; 1972a; 1972b).

The Frankfurt School played an important part in the development of what is termed "Western Marxism" (Callinicos, 1985). Building on Marx's

critique of political economy, the first generation of the Frankfurt School developed an expansive critique of social domination which extended Marx's analysis of the economic base of society to the cultural superstructure, and examined the ways in which the two work to mutually reinforce one another. The early critical theory of Horkheimer interpreted Marxism as a method of materialist social critique, in which dominant conceptions of society, such as the political economy of scholars such as Adam Smith, could be interrogated and shown to be self-negating. There is a huge literature involving critical research into ELT, which has drawn on a variety of theoretical traditions; however, early Frankfurt School critical theory remains underutilized in this work. This represents a significant gap in the critical ELT literature, given that much critical research can trace its roots back to the Frankfurt School, despite having developed in a number of new directions since the initial coinage of the term by Horkheimer. Although there has been some discussion of Frankfurt School theory in applied linguistics and ELT research (see McDonald & O'Regan, 2013; O'Regan, 2014; Pennycook, 2001; 2021), the majority of this discussion has taken place in the field of critical discourse analysis (Forchtner, 2011; O'Regan, 2006; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), and often with a focus on the second-generation critical theory of Habermas (e.g., Cukier, Bower & Middleton, 2004; Romanowski, 2014; Wodak, 2002) or the work of later theorists such as Axel Honneth (Stewart, 2020), many of whom developed forms of critical theory far removed from the early conception of Horkheimer. Furthermore, while Frankfurt School critical theory may be mentioned and utilized on occasion, it is rarely adopted as a primary foundation for research, and is more likely to be hybridized with the work of writers such as Foucault and Derrida (e.g., Morgan, 2009; O'Regan, 2006), or included as one among many theoretical "resources" for researchers to draw on (see for example Kubota, 2012; Lin, 2012; Pennycook, 2010). Recent work by Spolsky (2022) has positioned Frankfurt School critical theory as a forerunner of modern identity politics, and presented a simplified version of the theory that makes little distinction between the writing of Horkheimer in the 1930s (see Abromeit, 2011) and the work of Herbert Marcuse in the 1960s and 1970s (see Katz, 1982; Marcuse, 1969; 1972; 2022a; 2022b). This kind of summary abridges the developments of critical theory both temporally and in the work of different theorists (see Held, 1980), downplays the rifts that grew between the members of the school over time (see Wiggershaus, 1994), and as Pennycook (2022) suggests, dismisses the developing concerns of the school "rather too easily" (p. 224). There is thus a need for a more rigorous and sustained engagement with the important strand of critical social theory related to the early Frankfurt School and particularly, in my view, the early work of Max Horkheimer. The first chapter of this book contains an overview of some key concepts and elements of Horkheimer's early critical theory, and an attempt to relate them, at least provisionally, to contemporary concerns in ELT and applied linguistics.

Given this historical lack of engagement, it is necessary to demonstrate the relevance of Frankfurt School critical theory to ELT. This is because, while critical social research is historically associated with the work of Marx and the Frankfurt School, the term "critical" is not always rooted in a specific theoretical milieu. In much work calling itself "critical", the meaning of the term is not clearly stated, and must instead be inferred based on the type of analysis undertaken. This is reflected in the professional literature. For example, the webpage of the journal *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* (n.d.) states that the publication

> focuses on critical discourse and research in language matters, broadly conceived, that is generated from qualitative, critical pedagogical, and emergent paradigms. In these paradigms, language is considered to be a socially constituted cultural construct that gives shape to, and at the same time is shaped by, the larger social, political, and historical contexts of its use.

This explanation, with non-specific references to "qualitative, critical pedagogical, and emergent paradigms," is perhaps intentionally vague, especially given the journal's goal to "bridge arbitrary disciplinary territories." But it is also reflective of the vagueness with which the term "critical" is used in applied linguistic work generally. Block (2022) has observed that the use of this terminology is often "underdeveloped" and that "'critical' all too often seems to mean that authors see themselves as 'critical' and/or call their research 'critical X' without any explanation of why they and it are critical" (p. 46). In the work of qualitative researchers such as Denzin (2010), "critical" research appears to be that which is interpretive, focused on social justice, and oriented towards achieving social change. Denzin suggests that such work emerged from the paradigm wars of the 1980s and includes elements of postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminism, cultural studies, and a variety of other social and philosophical movements. While Denzin is clear that qualitative researchers should be open to a variety of schools of thought, so long as they are contributing to a shared vision of human emancipation, this still seems like an unsatisfactory conceptualization of "critical" research. On what assumptions and commitments is such a project based? What is its underlying philosophy? How can we justify centering some political commitments over any others in our research? And how does research contribute to the realization of this vision? These are the questions I wanted to answer.

The approaches taken by avowedly "critical" researchers in ELT and applied linguistics can be roughly grouped into two categories. The first of these may variously (although not necessarily by the authors themselves) be termed neo-Marxist, modernist, or structuralist (see for example Harvey, 2003; Pennycook, 2021), and is focused on questions of inequality and redistribution (Pennycook, 2021). This perspective is represented by work such as Phillipson's (1992) linguistic imperialism thesis, and Heller and McElhinny's

(2017) work on language, state, and ideology. This category also includes work which is directly influenced by Marxism, such as Block (2018), Holborow (1999; 2015), O'Regan (2021), and Simpson (2022). The second major approach can be characterized as broadly poststructuralist in nature, and is focused on issues related to identity, diversity, and inclusion, shifting the locus of concern from structure to agency (see Block, 2006). This is represented best by scholars who have investigated topics such as gender and sexuality (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2021; Nelson, 2009), race (Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Kubota, 2003; Kubota & Lin, 2011), and speakerhood (Aneja, 2016; Holliday, 2005; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016; Yang & Forbes, 2025), as well as the intersections between these (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020), and how they manifest in ELT. Another recent perspective is that of raciolinguistics, which examines how ideas around race interact with language (Alim, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2023). Scholars working in raciolinguistics explore how historically constituted and prejudiced notions of race can lead to perceptions of linguistic deficiency (Rosa & Flores, 2017), while ideas about language can in turn serve to perpetuate racial hierarchies (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Much of this work has focused on the role that discourse plays in the construction of identity, and the exploration and problematizing of power relations within a given context (Bouchard, 2022). There have also been increasing tendencies to incorporate perspectives influenced by posthumanism (Pennycook, 2018), postcolonialism (Kubota, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 1993; Pennycook & Makoni, 2022), and new materialisms (Toohey, 2019) in critical work, which gives researchers a wide scope for incorporating insights from several perspectives, rather than being limited to only one (Fitzpatrick & May, 2022, p. 67). Until recently, the dominant theoretical perspective adopted by critical researchers has been, broadly speaking, poststructuralist; that is, researchers have focused on issues of cultural and linguistic hybridity, and have sought to trouble and deconstruct fixed binaries related to language and identity (see Fitzpatrick & May, 2022; Hammine & Rudolph, 2022; McNamara, 2012; Morgan, 2007; Norton & Morgan, 2021; Pennycook, 2001; Rudolph, 2022). This is particularly the case among qualitative researchers (e.g., Lowe & Lawrence, 2020; Selvi, Rudolph & Yazan, 2022; Stanley, 2019), mirroring work in critical qualitative social research more broadly, which Denzin (2010) suggests is interpretive, focused on social justice, and oriented towards achieving social change.

However, recent work in applied linguistics has begun to question this loose orthodoxy, and to reassert the need for a more structural critique, both of the ELT industry itself, and of the economic and social forces which shape it. English language teaching is a multi-billion-dollar global industry, and one that is deeply influential on the lives of millions of people. The prominence of English as a language of global communication, business, and entertainment has led to the creation of a huge industry of language teaching, materials writing, language testing, and educational consulting (see Jordan & Long,

2022 for a recent summary of research on these points). As with any global industry of this scale, the lives of millions of people are caught up with ELT, and their engagement with the industry can have a profound effect on their wellbeing. The world is facing increasing structural challenges, and this has occasioned a turn in critical social research towards more structural forms of critique. In applied linguistics and ELT research, this can be seen in the work of scholars such as Kubota (2016), who has suggested that an excessive focus on identity has placed critical scholarship in danger of giving in to narratives of neoliberal diversity, leaving inequitable structures themselves unchallenged. Such concerns have led writers such as Block (2022) and Pennycook (2021) to seek a greater level of balance or some degree of reconciliation between their formerly strong poststructuralist positions, and perspectives that are more capable of analysing the deep global challenges we currently face, such as accelerating wealth inequality, climate change, and the relationships between these issues, language, and discourse. These concerns can be seen represented in work in applied linguistics and ELT related to issues such as social class (Block, 2013) and conducted from Marxist (Block, 2018; Bruzos, 2022; Simpson, 2018; 2022), critical realist (Block, 2022; Bouchard, 2022), and ecological (Goulah & Katunich, 2021; Stibbe, 2021) perspectives. This book aims to contribute to this growing area of work by providing an in-depth exploration of early Frankfurt school critical theory, and by drawing on some of the key principles of this approach to create a practical methodology for critical qualitative research in the field. In demonstrating the use of this framework in action, the book acts both as a guide that can be followed by other researchers seeking to apply the frame analysis approach, and also as a review of a range of theoretical resources which may be taken up and adapted in new ways by others.

Having become more conscious of the varied positions taken by "critical" researchers, I became interested in trying to develop and articulate my own position and orientation towards carrying out "critical" research, and this led me to look more deeply into work on social philosophy and political economy. Particularly formative were the reading groups that I, along with other early career researchers in Japan, began to participate in. These reading groups were multiple and varied, and in them we read through and discussed texts from Marx, Bourdieu, and writers in the Frankfurt School critical theory tradition. Based on this reading, and following my own subsequent investigations into the literature, I developed a framework for critical research appropriate to my work, which is the subject of Chapter 2. Drawing on the early writings of Karl Marx (see Musto, 2021; Ollman, 1976), the early critical theory of the Frankfurt school, and more recent work from Rahel Jaeggi (2014), this framework takes the concept of *alienation* as its grounding, and it is suggested that the goal of this form of critical research is to overcome alienation by finding opportunities for human emancipation from conditions of political, economic, and social domination, that is, from conditions in

which people are prevented from self-directed interaction with the world around them, and thus from the freedom to author their own lives. Practically, I draw on ideas from the early critical theory of Max Horkheimer to suggest this can best be accomplished through a form of empirical, interdisciplinary social research focused on ideology critique. The next challenge was to translate this theoretical perspective into a practical approach for carrying out qualitative research.

Developing a qualitative *bricolage*

This brings us to the second question this book attempts to answer: how to take a critical approach to qualitative research. The early critical theory of the Frankfurt School on which this book is based was focused on developing a programme of interdisciplinary empirical research, in which attempts would be made to combine the insights from a multitude of research areas into a versatile critical theory of society. While much of this research was focused on topics such as aesthetics (Adorno, 1998), musicology (Adorno, 2007), and literature (Löwenthal, 2017), it was also characterized by large-scale quantitative studies in the tradition of the empirical social sciences (Abromeit, 2011; 2019; Wheatland, 2009; Wiggershaus, 1994; for examples, see Adorno, et al. 2019; Fromm, 1984). In adapting this theoretical perspective in the development of my own approach to qualitative research, I was faced with the challenge of making these pieces fit together. Rather than drawing from one established methodological framework, I decided that it would be necessary to develop a *bricolage* (Denzin, 2010; Kincheloe, et al. 2017) combining a variety of conceptual and methodological tools from qualitative approaches to research in the social sciences. Within qualitative research, a bricolage refers to the mixing of methods and perspectives by a researcher in order to create an approach suitable to study of a specific problem or issue (Pratt et al., 2022). As I worked on my bricolage, I drew on ideas from critical ethnography (see Palmer & Caldas, 2017; Talmy, 2012; for examples, see Bori, 2021; Canagarajah, 1993; Despagne, 2020; Phyak, 2013; Stanley, 2013), critical participatory action research (Fine & Torre, 2021), critical pedagogy (e.g., Friere, 1974; López-Gopar, 2014), critical discourse analysis (Lin, 2012), and ideas around framing in the social sciences (Feagin, 2013; Goffman, 1974; Johnston & Noakes, 2005; Snow, 2004; Snow, et al., 1986). Through a combination of ideas from these approaches I finally arrived at a research method which fulfilled my aims. This approach was trialled in a series of preparatory studies (Lowe, 2022; 2023; in press), with adjustments made, when necessary, until the form presented in this book was finally arrived at. This book therefore represents the culmination of my efforts to develop an approach to critical qualitative work.

This has not, however, been a simple or straightforward process. In fact, the question of how to use this theoretical perspective to inform my qualitative

research is one with which I have struggled both in earlier work and during the writing of this book. As a qualitative researcher, my focus is on understanding specific settings and the beliefs and actions of people in those settings. This would seem to require an approach which is descriptive, rather than prescriptive. How can the collection and examination of qualitative data contribute to the conception of critical research I have aligned myself with, in which the researcher hopes to contribute to the transformation of society? The answer to this second question takes up the bulk of this book. In Chapter 3, I articulate a specific approach to critical qualitative research which I term *frame analysis*. Borrowing and adapting concepts from social movement research and other areas of social inquiry, I discuss how an examination of the framing employed by participants in a research context can be used as a way of uncovering the ideological foundations on which this framing rests. I suggest that, drawing on the concept of immanent critique, the researcher can try to document apparent contradictions between the framing of participants, and the implicitly understood realities of the social world in which they live. The researcher, in other words, tries to find gaps between their participants' conception of the world, and the way the world actually is. In presenting these ideas to the participants, the researcher aims to raise consciousness about these contradictions, in the hope of spurring a realization on the part of the participants that the ideology they have espoused is not reflective of the world; that, indeed, it may serve to mask the true nature of the social conditions in which they live, thus functioning to preserve and reproduce society in its current form. Further, they may realize that the beliefs and principles which inform their framing may become self-negating when unfolded in practice. Through the analysis of framing, it is hoped that participants will recognize this disconnect between words and deeds, and thus attempt to transcend both—developing a model of the world which accounts for inequalities and power imbalances, while also realizing the aspects of the material world that would need to be changed for a more just social order to be brought about. These changes in perspective can then be recorded through what I term "counter-framing", or new instances of framing which demonstrate an awareness of the gaps between the ideal and real, and which therefore potentially contain seeds of change.

In answering the two questions I set for myself here, I have appropriated ideas and concepts quite liberally from a variety of sources. In some cases, I use concepts in ways quite similar to those from whom they were borrowed, while in other cases my use of the terms differs substantially from the original sources, as I have adapted them to my own purposes. To avoid any confusion, I will highlight areas, particularly in Chapter 3, where my use of terms differs from that of the source literature from which they are drawn. I understand that some readers may object to my use of certain terms and concepts, particularly where they may diverge from accepted usage in other fields. However, what I hope to do here is create a living, animated theoretical and methodological framework, rather than to tour an ossuary of dead texts.

Structure of the book

So far in this chapter, I have attempted to outline the inspirations that led to the writing of this book, and the twin aims I have set for myself in (a) assembling a set of theoretical principles for conducting critical research, and (b) putting together a method for carrying out qualitative research that is informed by these principles. The book itself is designed to reflect these aims, and to guide the reader through the principles and practices, without allowing the method to calcify into a narrow set of prescriptions. To this end, I have attempted to position this book as a hybrid of a methodological guide and a research report. A detailed research report is provided; however, the purpose of the report is primarily to illustrate the research practices in motion. It is intended to highlight the strengths of the frame analysis approach, but also to encourage readers to develop it in new directions through noting weaknesses and unanswered questions that may inspire further experimentation.

The book begins with two theoretical chapters focused on critical theory and frame analysis. Chapter 2 explores Max Horkheimer's conception of critical theory, and particularly focuses on the topics of *alienation, ideology*, and *immanent critique*. The goal of this chapter is to provide a theoretical backdrop against which the development of the frame analysis approach can be set. Following this, Chapter 3 focuses on the frame analysis approach itself, exploring the various qualitative methods and perspectives that influenced its construction, and outlining the steps to be followed when using this approach to collect and analyse data as part of a research project. A brief typology is also provided of the possible reactions of participants, and suggestions are given for how researchers can attempt to track the evolution of framing in the wake of their initial intervention. These two chapters therefore offer a rationale for the approach, a sketch of its development, and a brief guide to carrying it out in the field.

The theoretical section of the book is followed by three chapters in which the ideas are put into practice, using data from a small-scale qualitative study to illustrate each stage of the process. Chapter 4 describes the context of the study and examines the master framing of the participants, which represents the dominant ideology the participants held at the start of the project. This chapter also notes some of the potential contradictions between the stated values and beliefs of the participants, and their implicit recognition of how these stated values and beliefs did not align with their social and material reality. Some discussion of these potential tensions and contradictions is provided, and a description is given of how these implicit acknowledgements were recognized by the researcher. Following on from this, Chapter 5 explores some of the ways in which these apparent contradictions were presented to the participants, and their reactions to the contradictions are documented and discussed. The chapter shows both the immediate and delayed approaches to addressing contradictions that a researcher may take, and provides examples

of strategies for raising contradictions that can be used in the field. The reactions of the participants are used to illustrate the typology of responses developed in Chapter 3. Chapter 6 describes a limited approach to longitudinal data collection which was carried out in order to track the ways in which the participants' perspectives may have evolved following the intervention of the researcher. The final chapter is focused on tying together the threads that run through the book, highlighting some potential issues that may emerge when engaging in this kind of research project, and dealing with some unanswered questions that readers may have.

This book arose from a personal struggle to develop an identity as a critical researcher, and the method of frame analysis described represents a qualitative bricolage (Denzin, 2010) that I assembled through reading, writing, and experimentation. The frame analysis method was initially a tool developed for my personal use. However, through ongoing discussions with colleagues it became clear that this approach could be fruitfully applied in the work of others who share a similar concern with critical research. Therefore, one impetus for this book was to put together a fully worked out version of frame analysis that could be adopted and adapted by others. I hope that the chapters that follow will encourage others to experiment with the method, and to add and subtract new elements in the formulation of their own research projects. A bricolage is by definition a creative assemblage of tools put together to deal with the job at hand, and so I hope that the ideas presented herein are taken in new directions by others in ways that suit their own needs as researchers.

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2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR A CRITICAL APPROACH TO ELT RESEARCH

Introduction

This book aims to articulate and exemplify an approach to critical research in English language teaching, and this task requires at the outset a framework for what constitutes "critical" research. As noted in the previous chapter, the term "critical" is used by a variety of scholars working within different theoretical traditions, and often functions as little more than a shibboleth denoting a vague concern with power, inequality, and social justice (Block, 2022). As such, the goal of this chapter is to outline the basic critical framework that informs this study, drawing from a variety of theorists, but taking particular inspiration from the early critical theory of Max Horkheimer. I will first outline the origins of this form of critical theory, before going on to discuss in some detail the elements of Western Marxism (Callinicos, 1985) which constituted the major philosophical foundation stones of Horkheimer's thought, and the theoretical developments around these concepts that are important for the current work. In particular, I will focus on the concept of alienation and the emancipatory *aims* of critical theory, the critique of ideology, which is seen as a core *object* of study, and the *method* of immanent critique central to Horkheimer's analysis of society. At each step, I will include some consideration of how these concepts have been discussed in the literature on English language teaching.

Horkheimer's early critical theory

Critical theory is a broad label for a school of thought associated with the so-called "Frankfurt School" of philosophers and researchers, the major figures of which include Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, and Leo Löwenthal. While all forms of critical theory are concerned with expanding

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opportunities for human emancipation, each of the Frankfurt School thinkers influenced the direction of critical theory in a different way, sometimes producing versions which were at least partly incommensurate with one another. Despite the important work done by second- and third-generation members of the Frankfurt School, such as Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, the form of critical theory adhered to in this book is most closely aligned with the original conception developed by Max Horkheimer in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s (see Horkheimer, 1993, for the original statement of this research programme). While it may seem anachronistic to return to a theory developed nearly a century ago, I sympathise with Horkheimer's biographer John Abromeit (2011; 2013; 2019), who argues that in our current age, characterized as it is by crises of capitalism and resurgent right-wing populist nationalism, Horkheimer's early work has again become relevant for understanding and overcoming the challenges we face, and particularly for coming to terms with the reasons why people seem to support policies or hold values which appear to be antithetical to their own best interests.

Max Horkheimer was the second director of the Institute for Social Research, an independent Marxist research organisation affiliated first with The J.W. Goethe University in Frankfurt (from which is drawn the appellation of the "Frankfurt School") and later with Columbia University in the United States (for histories of the institute see Jay, 1973; Wiggershaus, 1993; Wheatland, 2009). The Institute for Social Research was established by Felix Weil, who financed it with a grant from his wealthy father. Although Weil did not act as director of the institute, the circles in which he moved appear to have had an influence on the character and direction of its projects. Weil was an associate of Karl Korsch, the Marxist philosopher and author, who, along with György Lukács (1972), was instrumental in the formation of an alternative school of Western Marxist thought which arose in opposition to the Eastern orthodoxy (Jay, 1973). In the 1920s, Korsch had broken with the mainstream communist movement over the publication of his controversial text *Marxism and philosophy* (2012), in which he argued that the Marxist–Leninist synthesis of the 2nd International was guilty of a simplistic and dogmatic economism in which Marxism was seen as a totalising and transhistorical theory of society and economics. The philosophical method and humanistic vision which underlay this critique had been abandoned, according to Korsch, and thus Marxism was in danger of becoming ossified and incapable of reflection and adaptation in the face of changing historical conditions. Both Korsch and Lukács presented heterodox readings of Marx's work, which focused on elucidating the subjective factors required for social transformation, and downplaying the supposedly objective and evolutionary tendencies towards immiseration under capitalism that would, according to orthodox Marxists, inexorably lead to social revolution (Kautzer, 2017). In the wake of Korsch and Lukács, Western Marxist thinkers have thus found inspiration both in the emancipatory dimension of Marx's work, and in

Marx's method of dialectical critique. Weil, in starting the Institute for Social Research, brought together several like-minded thinkers who developed a Marxist research programme which included these philosophical, psychological, subjective, and humanistic elements (Slater, 1977).

Working from these assumptions, the Institute, under Horkheimer's direction, aimed to originate a critical theory of society which would expose oppressive and inhuman conditions of life, and illuminate their causes. This was to be accomplished through a programme of empirical research designed as an ongoing, dialectical, and self-reflexive critique of social and economic structures, but also with a focus on psychological studies into the attitudes and beliefs of the members of various social strata which might act as a barrier to the progressive transformation of society. Taking seriously the Western Marxist claim that theory should be reworked in light of changing historical conditions, Horkheimer's programme of research retained the focus on understanding the economic base of society common to orthodox Marxism, but expanded the scope of research to also include the cultural superstructure, that is, the latticework of social systems and relations (educational, artistic, legal, etc.) which constitute society. In order to understand this in greater depth, there are three key elements that require elaboration. By providing this elaboration, I hope to fully explain the elements of Horkheimer's theory most relevant for the frame analysis approach, and to outline the ways in which I have updated it for use in this book. In the following sections I will give detailed accounts of the *aims*, the *objects*, and the *methods* of critical research, as understood and used herein.

Aims of critical research: From alienation to emancipation

As already noted, Horkheimer's early critical theory was a development of Marxism, and one point it shared with this was the focus of the young Marx on alienation and emancipation. While a central influence on early Frankfurt critical theory, alienation is also one of the points least explicitly discussed in the contemporaneous writings of the school. It is also the concept which perhaps requires the most revision, particularly in light of the work of more recent writers in the tradition such as Rahel Jaeggi. In this section I will outline the concept of alienation as developed by Marx, the forms in which it surfaced in Horkheimer's writing, and its contemporary reformulation by Jaeggi.

Alienation in Marx

Marx's work was based on a specific conception of human nature and human development, and his later influential writings on capitalism were built on this foundation (Fromm, 1961). Marx's theory of human nature and development, as expressed in the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* (1992a), was based around human interaction with the material and social world.

According to Marx, people can only come to know themselves through their interaction with, and manipulation of, the world around them. As Marx (1976, p. 283) explains in *Capital*:

> Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature.

For Marx, what distinguished humans from other animals—that is, what constituted human "species-being" (Masquelier, 2014)—was the fact that their interactions with the world were not simply instinctual, but were purposeful modes of self-expression, which could be planned in advance, and reflected on once completed. This is illustrated by the following quote (Marx, 1976, p. 283):

> A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.

Human nature is thus anthropogenic (that is, made by people themselves), and is defined by free, creative interaction with the world, a form of self-expression which represents people developing themselves through interaction with the material and social world. The thwarting of this meaningful and self-directed interaction is a direct cause of human discontent and dissatisfaction, as people lack any kind of power or control over their circumstances, and lose opportunities for self-development (Sayers, 2003).

Marx's economic critique can be understood as a critical application of this basic philosophy to the production process of industrial capitalism, specifically, the ways in which the relationship of the capitalist class to the means of production precluded the self-directed labour of workers. The labour carried out by craftspeople in preindustrial times was performed in a relatively self-directed way, and thus through the process of creative production the worker could come to develop their skills and talents. Indeed, as Ollman (1976) points out, for Marx unalienated labour is an act of creativity and a source of joy and satisfaction. However, in the industrial production process, the worker was obligated to contract out their labour to a capitalist, and thus was reduced only to an element of the machinery of production. As a result, Marx argued that under industrial capitalism the worker loses a great deal of autonomy in their work, and therefore becomes alienated from the object of

their labour, both legally and philosophically. The workers accordingly become alienated from themselves and from each other. Alienation is thus a result of a system in which people's relationships to each other and the natural world are disrupted, leading to an estrangement from their common humanity (Block, 2018).

Alienation in early critical theory

The concept of alienation was not of central concern to orthodox Marxism, and scholars such as Althusser (2005) have controversially suggested there was an "epistemic break" between the young and old Marx, in which such humanistic concerns were minimised. It was largely through the influence of Western Marxists such as Horkheimer that alienation once again became a prime concern of Marxist theorists (Musto, 2021; Slater, 1977). Gebhardt (1978) relates that "among the handful of unorthodox Marxists who tried to redeem the 'true' Marx from the mechanistic distortions of the 'official' doctrine of the Second International, Horkheimer staunchly defended the humanist dimension, the emphasis on emancipation in Marx's work" (p. 243). This concern was stimulated by his close collaboration with Erich Fromm, for whom alienation was a central issue (see Fromm, 1961; 2002), and it is clearly detectable throughout Horkheimer's writings. Even as late as 1957–8, when he had all but abandoned political radicalism, he could be found stating that "our practical philosophy is humanity. That men do not suffer misery, that creative beings can develop, is the purpose of action in general" (Horkheimer, 1978, p. 152).

While Horkheimer did not often directly reference alienation, he did refer to a related concept in Marx's theory—the *fetishism of commodities*, or the way in which commodities take on an abstract character, thus disguising the social relations that are complicit in their production. In critical theory, the concept of fetishism was developed into an account of social domination (Roberts, 2017), understood as "the domination of people by abstract social structures that people themselves constitute" (Postone, 1993, p. 30). Social and economic structures, although comprising human social relations, end up taking on an independent character and becoming a dominating force in people's lives. As Horkheimer (1978, p. 50) writes:

> The businessman is subject to laws which neither he nor any power with such a mandate created with purpose and deliberation. They are laws which the big capitalists and perhaps he himself skilfully make use of but whose existence must be accepted as a fact. Boom, bust, inflation, wars, and even the qualities of things and human beings the present society demands are a function of such laws, of the anonymous social reality, just as the rotation of the earth expresses the laws of dead nature. No single individual can do anything about them.

The idea that the social structure can become a dominating force in human life obviously has strong negative implications for the possibility of living an unalienated existence. For Horkheimer, society must be rationally organised so as to allow for the full development of people's faculties and the satisfaction of their drives, and this can only be achieved when humanity is universally emancipated from social domination (Jay, 1973, p. 57). Accordingly, as one of the leading contemporary exponents of critical theory, Axel Honneth (2014), has stated: "no concept has been more powerful in defining the character of early critical theory than that of alienation" (p. vii).

While Marx discussed his conception of alienation principally in the economic sphere, it is not necessarily restricted only to this role, but can be considered as related to a more general theory of human development. Fromm (1961, p. 47) writes that:

> For Marx, as for Hegel, the concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence, on the fact that man's existence is alienated from his essence, that in reality he is not what he potentially is, or, to put it differently, that he is not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be.

This implies that while Marx was concerned principally with the alienated conditions of the industrial working class, the concept of alienation can be applied broadly to conditions in which people are prevented from acting freely in the world, and are thus prevented from realizing their human potential. The critical theorist Rahel Jaeggi has recently engaged in a reconceptualization of alienation which makes it more amenable to this kind of analysis.

Alienation in the work of Rahel Jaeggi

For Jaeggi (2014), alienation is a result of estrangement from one's own life—a feeling that one does not have oneself at one's own command. Humans make their life their own through appropriating the world around them for their own ends (much as argued by Marx), and thus for Jaeggi, alienation occurs when one is denied this ability. People may be under the impression they have chosen their life themselves and achieved exactly what they set out to achieve, and yet may still feel uncomfortable and alienated from their life, like a stranger in a world of their own creation. Their life confronts them as an alien thing, over which they have nominally had control, but from which they feel disconnected. Because the circumstances in which they made their life were not self-selected, the life that results does not have the appearance of *their life*, or of a life chosen and created by themselves. Rather, it is a product of outside forces that have influenced not only what they have done, but also what they have desired to do. Alienation is accordingly the result not necessarily of overt oppression, but rather of the frustration of our attempts to

appropriate the world around us, and can therefore be understood as what Jaeggi terms "a disturbed relation of appropriation" (p. 151).

On Jaeggi's account, true freedom is understood as the ability to engage in the *authorship of one's own life*, with alienation the result of a life in which this authorial expression has been circumvented—a ghostwritten life, perhaps. Alienation is, in Jaeggi's words, "an impeded appropriation of world and self" (p. 151). In other words, humans engage in self-creation or self-invention though a "practical-experimental process" (p. 189) of creative, involved, interaction with the natural and social world, and when this process is disrupted, alienation results. Thus, alienation is the result of being prevented from the free authoring of one's own life, and the realization of whatever potentialities this could afford.

This is, in fact, not so far removed from Horkheimer's own belief that human nature is anthropogenic and that the individual should be given the greatest opportunity for self-development possible. For Horkheimer, human happiness and flourishing are contingent on universal emancipation from social domination. As Jay (1973, p. 298) writes, "it was decades before widespread concern for ecology, instrumental rationality,[1] and women's liberation emerged, issues that the Frankfurt School had treated with sophistication" (see Adorno, 2005; Adorno et al., 2019; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Löwenthal, 1987; 2017 for examples of these). On this understanding, it is possible to integrate perspectives from various social justice movements, and the concerns of a plurality of identity groups, into the critical approach to social research outlined here. For Horkheimer, the goal of such a research programme was to move towards a world in which humans could be liberated from relations of domination, and conditions of economic or social repression (Horkheimer, 1972a; b).

Alienation in language teaching and learning

Within the field of ELT, alienation has been discussed in a few key areas, perhaps the most obvious of which is alienation among teachers, that is, alienation from the act of teaching itself. Teaching is a creative act, and for many teachers their profession is a core part of their identity. Teachers often delight in sharing their classroom successes, innovative materials, and exciting activity ideas, a fact that can be attested to by anyone who has spent time in a staffroom with committed and passionate professionals.

However, various writers have explored how the rise of neoliberalism has impacted the ability of language teachers to engage in their work creatively. Holborow (2012a) defines neoliberalism as an economic philosophy in which human needs are believed to flourish best through "an institutional framework of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 15), which will supposedly allow for people to exercise their entrepreneurial skills (see also Harvey, 2007), thus leading to human flourishing. Neoliberalism

leads to a marketization of life, in which social functions and activities are recast in the metaphor of the market, and are influenced by a transactional logic of exchange.

As the reigning economic theory of the past 50 years, neoliberalism has influenced the field of ELT as much as any other. The increasing commercialization of ELT since the 1970s has led to an ever-greater stultification of teaching practices, and growing attempts by language schools and centres to standardize practice and deskill teachers, often couched within the language of "standards", "objectives", and "targets." Block and Gray (2012; 2016) have suggested that the marketisation of courses such as the Cambridge CELTA—a popular initial teacher training course—has led to a change in perception where teaching is seen less as a craft, and more as a kind of mechanistic process, akin to a factory production line. In such a system, reflective self-development is replaced by the routinization of procedures (Prabhu, 1990). In the context of Japanese *eikaiwa* (English conversation schools), Simpson (2022) describes how teachers are provided with lesson plans containing very specific instructions, and even anticipatory scripts of the kinds of interactions that may occur between teachers and students, thus aiming for a standardised "product." This is reminiscent of the course described by Lowe (2020) in which teachers were expected to follow lesson plans almost to the minute, so that every student would receive a standardised experience, and teachers could be easily and quickly swapped out in cases of illness or incapacity with minimal disruption to the class.

Jordan and Long (2022) attribute the deskilling of teachers in part to the development of the ELT coursebook as a global commercial product, which they describe as providing a one-size-fits-all backbone to a course (see also Copley, 2018; Kiczkowiak, 2021; Tomlinson, 2012). With the coursebook in place, the teaching can be left to instructors who are required to do little more than work through the book. The development of ELT into an industry primarily organized in the interests of commercial actors thus leads to a situation in which many teachers are limited in their creative expression and are unable to adapt their materials to the needs and interests of their learners (a point that Canagarajah, 2005, suggests is of key importance). As Crookes and Abednia (2021) argue, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the interests of commercial actors in ELT serve to undermine the creative aspects of the job, or, as Brosio (2003) puts it, to "rob teachers of the best part of our time on the job: creative interactive time with students as we discuss and inquire into issues and problems that command our authentic interest!" (p. 4).

Alienation may manifest among learners and users of English as well as teachers. Language is essential to our identity as humans. It is not only the means by which we communicate with others, but is also deeply tied to our sense of self. Our accents, our modes of expression, and the communicative competencies we embody all bear the stamp of our lives and experiences (Dörnyei & Mentzelopoulos, 2023). Language is one of the primary means by

which we relate to self and world, and is a central feature of our societies, our social relations, and our selves. It is also a key medium through which we interact with the world around us, and thus plays an important role in facilitating our self-development. It is therefore undoubtedly the case that language learning and use is an arena in which alienation may occur.

Many learners study English as a form of self-development, with the promise that they will become empowered and gain symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) through their language learning. As Simpson (2022) writes in the context of Japanese *eikaiwa* schools, many students engage in language study due to "the desire for participation in an imagined community of global cosmopolitans (…) [and] to live out their fantasies of self-transformation" (p. 85). Simpson points out that these are not merely fantasies, and that the desire of language learners can in many cases be realised through their language study. This may take the form of finding a job, developing international friendships, or even finding intimate partners. Many students engage in language study as a form of self-development, and it is thus perhaps worth exploring some of the barriers that may be placed in the way of such self-development, leading to feelings of alienation.

Language is not only strongly related to our identities, but is also a primary way in which we are judged by others. Kinzler (2020) points out that the way we speak can impact our employment prospects directly, as well as indirectly leading to social advancement or dismissal, noting that even our accents "can be a tool for political oppression and a driver of social and economic marginalisation" (p. 10). In other words, language is loaded with social and cultural capital, and speaking the most highly regarded form of the language in a particular context can have a deep and lasting impact on a person's life trajectory. The pressure exerted by these economic and social structures can lead to people altering or abandoning aspects of their linguistic identity. For example, Ramjattan (2019; 2022) has catalogued how accent reduction programmes are marketed to skilled immigrants in the Global North, in order to improve their employability in companies that may see a non-Western accent as an impediment to conducting business successfully. This process also takes place outside of the West—Dhami (2023), in a study of the identity of Nepalese speakers of English, found that while the unique features of this variety of English are an important part of people's identities, the teaching and learning of English is still "subjugated" by exonormative standards.

This influence has also been borne out in research on translanguaging. Translanguaging is a perspective that focuses on the constantly expanding linguistic repertoires of individual language users (García & Li, 2014). Rather than envisaging several distinct languages within one mind, the translanguaging perspective suggests that each person has a unique linguistic repertoire comprising a variety of linguistic resources, which they can blend and mix in the pursuit of their communicative purposes. This perspective is claimed to be empowering as it allows people to express their complex linguistic identities in

a variety of domains, thus pushing back against monolingual beliefs and practices, which may exist at either a national or an institutional level (Kim & Lee, 2024).

However, the possibility for enacting identity through translanguaging has been called into question. O'Regan (2021) suggests that for those working in industries such as academia, acceptable forms of English use are determined by the need to publish papers, present at academic conferences, and write research grants, all of which often presuppose the use of standard English. Zheng & Lawrence (2023) in a study on translanguaging among Chinese international students at UK universities acknowledge the economic influence that may affect the translanguaging practices of language learners, particularly those interested in entering the field of language education. They state that from the perspective of one of their participants

> study experience in the native-English speaking country is highly valued because it is closely associated with the opportunity to reach a native-like English proficiency (…) [and] this is particularly true for students who wish to become English teachers, as acquiring native-like language proficiency is believed to help them with securing good employment opportunities.
>
> *(p. 7)*

The supposedly empowering effects of translanguaging are thus placed into question by the need for teachers to operate within professional spheres that require standard English and are marked by dominant social expectations about language use. Accordingly, while translanguaging is promoted as a practice that can empower people through expressing their identities, speakers who engage in translanguaging may find themselves paradoxically disempowered by the contradiction between their translanguaging practices, and the expectations, however unfair, of their professional contexts (Kim & Lee, 2024). As Duchêne and Heller (2012) point out, while language has traditionally been connected to identity, in the neoliberal era it is seen rather as "a technical skill to be sold on globalized markets" (Holborow, 2015, p. 64).

While language is a key way in which people express their identities, the economic and social circumstances in which people live may dictate that they alter their linguistic expression in order to fit expectations around standard language use. As Simpson (2018) points out, students pursuing English lessons are not wrong in thinking English may lead to social and economic advancement. Rather, they are acting in their rational self-interest in a world in which English (and often specific forms of English) really does lead to prosperity for many. However, while prosperity may be obtained, it may come at the cost of authentic self-expression, potentially leading to feelings of alienation.

Critical research must have a goal, and in this section, I have suggested that the goal of such research (at least, as I conceive of it) should be emancipation from social domination and alienation. Within language teaching, alienation

can result from the influence of a neoliberal approach to teaching that deskills teachers and drives materials to become bland, safe, and saleable. Within language learning and use, it may be caused by the circumvention of an individual's authentic mode of expression, owing to the need to produce forms of the language more amenable to the accumulation of economic or symbolic capital. This raises a question: If social and economic structures can have such negative effects, why do they continue to hold so much power? For Horkheimer and his colleagues, this was largely due to their maintenance and perpetuation through dominant ideology.

Object of critical research: Ideology critique

Ideology is a highly contentious term. In its most widespread use, it refers to any specific web of beliefs and commitments that can be used to undergird political action. As Eagleton (2007) writes, accepting this "neutral" (Thompson, 1984) definition entails that both racism and anti-racism can be referred to as ideologies, and no implication is necessarily made regarding the truth or falsity of specific ideological commitments. Rather, these are seen as political-philosophical worldviews which are in combat (or, more charitably, in dialogue) with one another. However, despite the fact no negative association is inherent in this definition of "ideology," most people would resist the classification of their own thought as "ideological." This is because to refer to something as "ideological" seems to imply a narrow dogmatism—the elevation of a political commitment above the truth value of the belief. For most then, even under this "neutral" definition, ideology maintains some connotation with mendacity or inaccuracy, and this is particularly true for the Marxist definition of the term.

In Marxist theory, ideology refers to the set of necessary beliefs that uphold the values and social structures that benefit a ruling class. In opposition to the idealism of much German philosophy popular at the time, Marx and Engels argued that rather than thought determining the material world, it is the material world that shapes thought. "Material" here does not refer simply to tangible objects, but rather to anything that exists apart from consciousness and can have effects in the world independently of consciousness (Porpora, 1993). As Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology* (1998, p. 42):

> In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is

> empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.

According to Marx and Engels, society is structured in such a way as to uphold the interests of the most dominant social classes, and this is reflected in widely held beliefs which serve to reproduce the social conditions that allow those groups to maintain their dominance. This is not to suggest that people are simply brainwashed by the ruling classes, or that the ruling classes themselves exist outside of ideology as its authors but not receivers, but rather that powerful groups in society have access to the economic and communicative resources to ensure their voices are heard the loudest and become reified (i.e., made concrete rather than abstract) (Holborow, 2012a), a concept Gramsci (Gramsci & Hoare, 1985) refers to as "hegemony." These dominant beliefs are thus held not only by the class from which they originate, but also become a kind of "common sense," the maintenance and reinforcement of which makes the majority of the population complicit in their own subjugation. This leads Ng (2015) to define ideologies as "social practices and forms of rationality that distort the relation between life and self-consciousness and block the full actualization of human reason and freedom" (p. 393).

As a committed Marxist (at the time), Horkheimer subscribed to this definition of ideology, as seen in several of the aphorisms published in the book *Dämmerung* (Horkheimer, 1978). Both he and his collaborator Theodor Adorno took great exception to an attempted redefinition of the term by Karl Mannheim (1991), one of the founders of the sociology of knowledge (Horkheimer, 1993b; Müller-Doohm, 2005), which would have aligned it more with the "neutral" definition given earlier.[2] In light of political and social developments during the 1930s, ideology was to become a central concern of critical theory.

Once again, this concern resonates with the work of Korsch and Lukács, who both argued that the development of a socialist society could not be assumed to follow naturally based only on contradictions inherent in the capitalist system. Further, they cast doubt on the notion that the working class could be assumed to play the role of the "subject of history," who would bring about revolution when the objective conditions were right. Contrary to this evolutionary view of social change, which was popular in "official" Marxist theory of the time, Korsch and Lukács suggested that any large-scale social change was dependent on the conditions of the social totality, which included the "subjective consciousness of the working class" (Durkin, 2018, p. 58), and that it was thus important to investigate the psychological

dispositions of workers. This became an even more pressing concern of Western Marxists as the political situation in Europe deteriorated, and malign political forces began to take hold. The members of the Frankfurt School, like many Marxists at the start of the 20th century, had expected to see a revolution take place in which progressive economic and social values could be realized. However, what they instead saw was the rising tide of national socialism in their native Germany, and parallel authoritarian movements in other countries around the world. The Russian revolution, about which they were initially enthused, soon began to degenerate into ever greater forms of authoritarian state repression and human misery. To understand why this was the case, ideology critique became a task of paramount importance.

Horkheimer's early empirical work with Erich Fromm on the latent authoritarianism of German workers (eventually published as Fromm, 1984) led him to question the centrality of the worker's movement in emancipatory struggles. Indeed, based on the results of this study, Horkheimer suggested that should Nazism attempt to gain power, it was likely to receive the support of many in the German working class, a prediction which was sadly borne out a few years later (Abromeit, 2013). As a result, Horkheimer contended that it was necessary to understand the extent to which bourgeois ideology had been normalized in society generally, and through such an understanding to confront and challenge this ideology. This project was what Horkheimer (1993c) referred to as the "anthropology of the bourgeois epoch."

Following a programme of research formulated by Horkheimer and using Freudian psychoanalytic categories as a mediating conceptual framework, the Frankfurt School scholars set out to investigate a variety of social structures in order to understand how ideology could come to be ingrained in the thought patterns of the general public. Drawing on their individual talents and areas of specialism, the members of the Institute for Social Research engaged in an interdisciplinary research programme of social critique in order to understand, and thus challenge, the ideology which prevented people from coming to understand their class position and act accordingly. As Ng (2015) explains, in critical theory "the critique of ideology has become an indispensable method for assessing the extent to which a form of life (…) can enable or block the realization of freedom for its members" (p. 393). Ideology critique has thus remained a central element of critical social research, and it is the investigation and critique of ideology with which this book is concerned.

Ideology in ELT

As in literature on ideology in other fields, the term "ideology" in ELT is used in a number of different ways. Indeed, in much literature the term is used somewhat unclearly and inexactly (see Lowe, 2020, for an example of such slippery usage). As such, it is necessary to look at some of the ways in which the term has been used in the past, and to discuss how these uses

both share points in common with, and differ from, the way the term is defined in this book.

ELT is a field focused on the learning and teaching of language, and so when discussing ideology within the field, it is instructive to first examine what is meant by a language ideology. Gal (2023) defines language ideologies as "socially embedded understandings about the nature, structure and use of linguistic forms" and as "politically positioned evaluations of whatever linguistic practices are significant to a social group." The political implications of language ideologies are very important. For example, it is on the basis of language ideologies that we make judgements about the relative value of various forms of English, a point which is important because the mastery of highly valued forms of the language can lead to speakers being endowed with symbolic capital (Woolard, 2020), or to be alienated in ways described in the previous section. Two very clear examples of language ideologies are the twin constructs of *anonymity* and *authenticity*, as described by Gal (2023) and Woolard (2020). Anonymity refers to the referential use of language as divorced from its social contexts, while authenticity refers to the authority granted to forms of language which are rooted in the identity or culture of particular speakers and users of the language. These two constructs are incommensurable. The first conceptualises of language as a representational system which reflects the world neutrally as it is, while the second sees language as socially situated and validated by the use of those speakers who have authority over it. Within the field of ELT, these concepts can be mapped on to concepts commonly discussed in the literature, with the anonymity perspective reminiscent of what Block & Gray (2016) refer to as the neoliberal conception of English as a tool divorced from its cultural roots, and the idea of authenticity reflective of what can been called the 'native speakerist' perspective which views language as the property of a particular group of speakers (Holliday, 2005; Hutton, 2010; Lowe & Pinner, 2016)

In work on language ideologies, the term "ideology" is often used more in keeping with the "neutral" definition described by Thompson (1984), which, as already explained, differs in some key ways from the use of the term in this book. While it is clear that the authors consider some ideologies preferable to others, in this work "ideologies" are often understood as opposing views representing different conceptions of reality. This stands in contrast to the understanding of ideology as it is used in critical theory, and in this book, which views ideology as a set of dominant beliefs that serve to distort social reality so as to discourage people from acting in their best interests, thereby reinforcing the power of dominant groups in society and maintaining relations of social domination.

There is research in applied linguistics which works with a definition of ideology which is closer (though not identical) to this view. To take a specific example, Holborow (2012b) discusses how the ideology of neoliberalism has influenced ideas surrounding language, and also how language itself is used as

a vessel to reinforce dominant ideology. Holborow focuses on what she terms the "neoliberal keywords" which characterise dominant discourses in society. These are keywords drawn from ideas associated with neoliberalism, and Holborow argues that their dissemination is intended to "subsume all areas of social life into the frame of free-market economics" (Holborow, 2012b, p. 46; see also Chun, 2017). These keywords include *entrepreneur, human capital*, and *deregulate*, and are used to expand the logic of the market to other facets of human existence. The promotion of these keywords serves to embed within language the precepts of neoliberal ideology, and through the constant use of these market-based metaphors to reify this ideology as the common sense frame of reference for social action. This work adopts a more overtly Marxist perspective, focusing on how the system of neoliberalism is in part maintained through the promotion of discourses that uphold and reinforce its precepts as natural and unobjectionable, thus helping to ensure its continuation as the dominant global economic system.

Within discussions about language then, there are a variety of understandings of ideology, which provide distinct (though overlapping) definitions of the concept. This is true also within the subfield of English language teaching, in which there are several dominant beliefs that have been critiqued as ideological. However, it is not always clear exactly how this term is meant to be understood. Examples of ideas which have been condemned as ideological are numerous. One common example is the notion that English, and particularly Western inner-circle forms of English, are inherently superior to other varieties of the language, and are those which are the most suitable for teaching and learning (Kachru, 1985; Kubota, 2018; Wee, 2005). In addition to these, there are a number of beliefs specific to the field of ELT that have been suggested as having an ideological character, among which are the use of English-only in classrooms (Lowe, 2020), the necessity of so-called 'native speaker' teachers for language study (Phillipson, 1992; Wright, 2022), and the belief that oral-first communicative teaching methods are inherently of greater worth than the educational technologies of non-Western countries (Tollefson, 2007), all of which are subsumed under the umbrella concept of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005).

Within this kind of work, the term "ideology" appears to be used in a generally negative sense, to mean something like a belief system that serves as "an important means by which dominant forces in society can exercise power over subordinate and subjugated groups" (Machin & Mayr, 2020, p. 24), and thus resonates with the concept of ideology adopted in this book. This similarity is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the work of writers such as Gray (2012) and Bori (2018), who draw on Frankfurt school critical theory (among other theoretical resources) to critique language teaching materials such as coursebooks, and the neoliberal ideology they promote. Gray (2012) focuses on the depictions of celebrities in mass-produced global coursebooks, and through an analysis of several textbook series, shows that books produced

since the 1990s tend to present celebrities as aspirational, particularly in terms of their economic success or business acumen, and to promote the message that prosperity is a result of individual effort, even in the face of oppositional circumstances. According to Gray, these books promote an ideology of individualism, which sits at the heart of neoliberal philosophy, and thus serves to make the language classroom a space in which this ideology is promoted to students. Numerous studies have found similarly neoliberal discourses at the heart of textbooks for the teaching of English (Gray, 2010a; b; Gray & Block, 2014), Catalan (Bori, 2018), and French (Block & Gray, 2018).

There are clear commonalities between the way the concept of ideology is understood in the literature described above, and the way it is used in this book. Both understandings are sensitive to the political implications of ideology, and both view ideologies as having the potential to reinforce and reify a particular worldview, at the expense of those whose interests such a worldview does not serve. However, the conception of ideology adhered to in this book places slightly more weight on the notion of ideological *falsity*. I wish to argue that belief systems can not only be shown to be one-sided or to act against the interests of those who hold them—they can also be shown to have a plainly false character. While, as Simpson (2018) argues, students may be correct in thinking that English study will lead to forms of prosperity (although this is of course not guaranteed), the fact that this is the case may itself be partially attributable to dominant ideology—that is, to conceptions of the world that normalise and legitimise the status quo, and thus lessen possibilities for social change. Naturally, this raises the question of how a belief can be shown to be false. How can one demonstrate that a belief is ideological in this sense, and what allows a researcher to put themselves in a position to make such a claim? This brings us to the question of method—how is one to identify beliefs which are ideological?

Methods of critical research: Immanent critique

One of the main innovations of Western Marxism, and one signature contribution of the Frankfurt School, is the reinterpretation of Marxism as a method for critiquing society, rather than as a formalised economic system. In orthodox Marxism, Marx's work was read as a positive form of "Marxian" economics, which contained a theory of value based on average social labour time, and worked outwards from this to formulate a theory of exploitation, of history, and of revolution. However, as Postone (1993) has argued, this traditional interpretation of Marxist categories of analysis was not capable of producing a critique of the kind of society constructed in the Soviet Union, a state in which the oppression and alienation of workers was probably just as severe as under capitalism, if not more so. Accordingly, for Korsch, as for Lukács, Marxism was not best understood as describing a fixed *system* of how society is and should be organised, but was rather a *method* for critically analysing society, and should

therefore be responsive to changes in the environment in which it was deployed (Devlin, 2022). The subtitle of "Capital" is, after all, "A *critique* of political economy" (emphasis added). Rather than reading Marx as an economic theorist, Western Marxists understood him as a critic of classical economics, who was attempting not to put forward a positive economic theory, but rather to illuminate the internal contradictions and tensions within the classical economic theories of writers such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Indeed, as Wiggershaus (1994, p. 178) points out, it appears Marx himself had considered his work on economics to be only part of a larger effort to develop a materialist form of dialectical logic. Thus, Western Marxists interpreted Marxism not simply as a theory of society, but as a method of materialist, dialectical social critique, one that Marx had effectively applied to the subject of economics. This methodological focus was carried over to the theorists of the Frankfurt School.

For Horkheimer and his colleagues, the goal of a critical theory was to apply this method of critique to the analysis of the present society. This method was based on dialectics, a reflexive mode of thought that seeks to analyse and expose the internal tensions and contradictions inherent within a particular object of study, showing it to be a dynamic unity of opposing parts, rather than the stable totality it may appear to be on the surface (see Ollman, 2003). "Contradictions" in the sense used here can be thought of as something akin to tensions or antagonisms between opposed forces. Specifically, the mode of investigation adopted by the early Frankfurt School is known as *immanent critique*. Immanent critique refers to a method of investigation in which all the premises of the position under consideration are assumed, and the position is then critiqued on its own terms—the beliefs contrasted with their intended outcomes. Immanent critique does not attack a structure from the outside, attempting to subject it to externally assumed standards of verification. Rather, it seeks to collapse it from the inside, undermining its foundations by highlighting internal contradictions that render the whole façade unstable (see O'Regan, 2014). Horkheimer and his colleagues suggested that just as Marx had engaged in an immanent critique of classical economics, critical theory should engage in an immanent critique of society itself (Held, 1980). Or, as Marx (1992b) put it, "these petrified conditions must be made to dance by having their own tune sung to them!" (p. 247). Marx's critique of liberal political economy pointed out how illiberal it was, and how it paradoxically greatly curtailed the freedom of individuals in society. The goal of critical theory was to build on this by providing an ongoing critique of society which highlighted its internal contradictions, with the hope that by laying such contradictions bare, it would be possible to expose the irrational state of capitalist society, and move towards a more humane social order.

In the Frankfurt School tradition then,

> Marx's theory is not considered to be one of material production and class structure alone, much less one of economics. Instead, it is

> understood as a theory of the historical constitution of determinate, reified forms of social objectivity and subjectivity. (Postone, 1993, pp. 15–16; see also Lange, 2018)

In these reformulations, Horkheimer showed his willingness to adhere to a central tenet of critical theory; namely, that such a theory should grasp society as a totality existing in a specific historical moment, and thus expose its own interpretations of social dynamics to continual revision, critique, and transformation.

For Horkheimer, "the ideology of the social object is its appearance as natural" (Best, Bonefeld, & O'Kane, 2018, p. 2)—in other words, relations which are socially constructed are assumed to be natural and immutable, thus preventing emancipatory change. This raises an important question: how can one person decide that another person's beliefs and political commitments are true or false? The theorist inhabits the same society as everyone else, and so it would be risible for them to claim that they can theorize from a privileged position of knowledge. To quote Stuart Hall (2016, pp. 83–84):

> I wonder how it is that all the people I know are absolutely convinced that they are not in false consciousness, but can tell at the drop of a hat that everybody else is. I have never understood how anyone can advance in the field of political organisation and struggle by ascribing an absolute distinction between those who can see through transparent surfaces, through the complexity of social relations, to the base (and who consequently act according to the real structure) and the vast numbers of people throughout the history of the world who are imprisoned, who are judgmental dopes, and who just can't tell what things are. They live their lives from day to day; they get their wages and salaries; they buy things; they eat; they raise families; they travel about; and in all this they just can't see reality, their own interests, or what they ought to think and do.

To answer this challenge, we must return to the dialectical approach outlined earlier. For Horkheimer, as well as later first-generation Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno and Marcuse, the critique of ideology is accomplished through a process of immanent critique. The researcher holds no special gods-eye view of society from which they can make pronouncements about the rightness or wrongness of anyone else's beliefs, nor do they assume they are penetratingly capable of social analysis while everyone else is living in a passive and zombielike state. Rather, the critical theorist proceeds with an internal critique of society, pitting different elements of the social totality against one another. They test the claims of society against its outcomes, and attempt thereby to demonstrate that certain beliefs have an ideological character—ideological because they are claims about society which are contradicted by true social conditions. Ideology is thus a belief shown to be false on

its own terms. Horkheimer sought to "turn the radical promise of bourgeois moral norms against the miserable reality of bourgeois society" (Ibsen, 2022, p. 157; see also Wheatland, 2009, p. 159), and thus throw into sharp relief the false nature of elements in the belief system. In so doing, a space would be opened for the development of human subjective consciousness, and for the possibility of altering the material conditions of life. As Ng (2015) notes, "understanding the relation between life and self-consciousness is crucial for ideology critique because what ideologies distort is the relation between self-consciousness and life, a relation that is fundamental to the actualization of human freedom" (p. 394). Horkheimer suggested that ideology could be uncovered by contrasting the highest values of a society with its real-life outcomes, thus revealing these beliefs to be merely palliatives that served to disguise relations of domination, and to mask the oppression of the social order (Antonio, 1981). This can be seen in the following passage from Horkheimer (1947, p. 121):

> Again and again in history, ideas have cast off their swaddling clothes and struck out against the social systems that bore them. The cause, in large degree, is that spirit, language, and all the realms of the mind necessarily stake universal claims. Even ruling groups, intent above all upon defending their particular interests, must stress universal motifs in religion, morality and science. Thus originates the contradiction between the existent and ideology, a contradiction that spurs all historical progress. While conformism presupposes the basic harmony of the two and includes the minor discrepancies in the ideology itself, philosophy makes men conscious of the contradiction between them. On the one hand it appraises society by the light of the very ideas that it recognizes as its highest values; on the other, it is aware that these ideas reflect the taints of reality.

Horkheimer suggested that there was a radical divergence between the claims and the actuality of society, and posited that by highlighting this divergence, the critical theorist could "restore the actuality to false appearance" (Schroyer, 1975, p. 31). In doing so, they could encourage people to work towards the realisation of their highest values, rather than being pacified by them. As Best, Bonefeld, and O'Kane (2018) put it, critical theory "entails confrontation of the cogitative account of society with its experience" (p. 3), through which values which once served to mask relations of domination are converted into weapons for attacking those relations, and thus transcending them. To quote Horkheimer (1993d, p. 41):

> [E]quality before the law had signified a step forward in the direction of Justice, inequality of property notwithstanding; today it has become inadequate because of this inequality. Freedom of public expression was a weapon in the struggle for better conditions; today it acts primarily to the

> advantage of conditions that have become obsolete. Sanctity of property was a protection of bourgeois labor against the clutches of the authorities; today it brings in its wake monopolization, the expropriation of further bourgeois strata, and the tying up of social resources.
>
> The alliance struck between the ruling power and the ideas of the bourgeoisie since the victory of the French Revolution confounds thought for this reason: these propelling ideas are alienated from and set against their logical proponents, the progressive forces of society. But it is precisely in the present, as humanity confronts the danger of ruin, that humanity is charged with their realization.

In realising that the current organisation of society is incapable of meeting the values it claims to serve, those values become ideals for which to fight, rather than promises that delay action in the expectation they will someday come good. Critique thus acts as a spur towards the realisation of potentialities that are immanent, but unrealised, in society.

These values themselves are, of course, open to questioning and negation. Critical theory seeks to create open systems of social critique, rather than closed ones—systems which are reflexive and able to adapt to historical transformations. Horkheimer refused to suggest what a better future society might look like, invoking the Jewish prohibition on depicting the divine (Jay, 2020, p. 27). As already noted, the Frankfurt School had strong reservations about centrally planned states, and were accordingly suspicious about attempts to prefigure utopia. Through immanent critique, they believed that a better social order could be worked towards while leaving open the greatest range of possibilities for what shape that society could eventually take.

Where does research come into the development of this critical theory of society? Critical theory is often conflated with poststructuralism and postmodernism, and consequently characterised as anti-realist and anti-empiricist. In fact, as Wheatland (2009) points out, early critical theory was strongly influenced by empirical research methods, and the Institute for Social Research engaged in a variety of empirical research projects (see also Löwenthal, 1987). However, rather than seeing empirical research as autonomous and able to provide independent facts about reality, Horkheimer believed that empirical research must be combined with social philosophy to create a reflexive and immanent critique of society. Immanent critique without data would be little more than empty theorising, while data absent philosophical reflection would simply be the collection of surface facts with no consideration on what these facts tell us about the deeper question of human flourishing (Lichtblau, 2018). As Horkheimer (1972c, p. 259) put it:

> [N]either the achievements of science by themselves, nor the advance in industrial method, are immediately identical with the real progress of mankind. It is obvious that man may be mentally, emotionally, and intellectually

> impoverished at decisive points despite the progress of science and industry. Science and technology are only elements in an existing social totality, and it is quite possible that, despite all their achievements, other factors, including the totality itself, could be moving backwards, that man could become increasingly stunted and unhappy, that the individual could become ruined, and nations headed toward disaster.

Horkheimer's early critical theory was thus one in which empirical data was put into dialogue with social philosophy, and used as a basis for the immanent critique of society. This data was to be used to create a picture of the social reality in which people lived, which could then be contrasted with society's conception of itself, and the highest values to which it aspired. Through this immanent critique of society, internal contradictions could be revealed which would demonstrate the ideological nature of dominant beliefs and values. By exposing this falsity, opportunities would arise for social transformation, as attempts were made to realign reality with its false appearance.

Uses of immanent critique in ELT

Within ELT research, there are only a few clear examples of immanent critique, named as such (although it may be implied or alluded to elsewhere). These studies have varied in terms of both topics covered and ambitions of the researchers, with some being more closely aligned with the way the method is used in this book than others.

There have been some studies that have used immanent critique as a way of evaluating classroom practices. For example, Pearson (2017) used a form of immanent critique combined with action research to engage in a critical evaluation of EAP practices in the UK university system. Through this process, Pearson noticed mismatches between her conception of projects she was asking students to do and the realities these projects led to. For example, she asked students to create *processfolios*, in which they tracked the development of an assignment through the inclusion of various preparatory pieces of work. While the goal of this task was to give students more opportunities to reflect on their work, and to develop "control over the way their abilities would be judged" (p. 11), Pearson found that in many cases the students felt the processfolio caused them to engage in a performative form of reflection that did not necessarily represent their true thoughts. Through combining immanent critique with an action research approach, the author was able to iteratively improve this activity until it more closely matched her initial conception.

In other work, immanent critique has been used to evaluate language policies as well as practices. Van der Walt (2018) adopted immanent critique as a method for examining the internal logic of policy documents related to the teaching of English in South Africa. While the documents espoused the

communicative approach as a theoretical basis for pedagogy, the sequencing of language presented in the documents was not aligned with this approach, as it focused on the prescriptive presentation of grammar, without any clear focus on its communicative context or functional relevance to the topic of the lessons. Through a critique of the internal logic of these documents, van der Walt was able to show that they failed on their own terms, and contradicted their own communicative principles. Based on this analysis, the author suggested the documents be reworked to contain a more systematic ordering of language structures in line with the theoretical foundations of the communicative approach.

Both of these uses of immanent critique are instructive as to how the method could be employed in ELT research, but they do not bear close relation to the use of the method in this book. A much more closely aligned study, and perhaps the most prominent use of immanent critique in ELT is O'Regan's (2014) paper "English as a Lingua Franca: An immanent critique," which sparked a series of responses and counter-responses in the pages of the journal *Applied Linguistic*s. In this paper, O'Regan attempted to use immanent critique to deconstruct the concept of English as a lingua franca, suggesting that ELF scholars argue for the construct's theoretical fluidity while at the same time seeming to reify its central concept, neglect the ways in which linguistic and cultural resources are unequally distributed under the system of neoliberal capitalism by flattening the social and economic differences between learners, and present a theoretically confused mix of postructuralist and rationalist perspectives to support their claims. O'Regan expanded this critique in his 2021 book *Global English and Political Economy*, in which he traced the ways in which English developed as a global language owing to its ability to act as a "free rider" on the back of the spread of capitalism, and suggested that the powerful economic forces that led to English becoming a global language also influence the forms of English which are considered acceptable for international business and academia. As such (and as noted previously), he disputed the claims made by scholars in the field of translanguaging, who aim to reframe language learning as a process by which people develop a constantly expanding repertoire of linguistic resources, which they can then use fluidly to achieve specific communicative purposes and to express their identities. O'Regan (2021) suggested that owing to the ways in which language spread as a tool of capital accumulation, forms of language use which are outside of the standard are unlikely to be accepted, and as such language learners who engage in translanguaging may potentially be disadvantaged by it, rather than gaining the empowerment promised (see for example Kim & Lee, 2024).

O'Regan has used immanent critique to study similar issues to those covered in this book, focusing on issues of ideology, political economy, and global Englishes. However, for an example of a study which makes connections between immanent critique and qualitative research, we must turn to

Simpson (2022). While not describing his work as "immanent critique," Simpson (working from a Marxist perspective) utilized a form of analysis focused on examining the contradictions and tensions inherent within the sphere of *eikaiwa* (English conversation school) employment in Japan. Through interviews with teachers, he teased out the potential contradictions between the production and consumption aspects of English conversation lessons. For example, Simpson identified a dialectical tension between the ways in which the school required teachers to produce lessons, and the expectations of students. On one hand, the teachers were expected to follow a Taylorized approach to lesson production in which the school set out lesson plans of exacting specificity for teachers to follow, so as to produce a standardised product in the form of the lesson. On the other hand, teachers were required to individualise the lessons to the needs of specific students in order to achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction and garner accordingly positive performance reviews. In drawing out these contradictions, Simpson helped to relate the working situations in which the teachers found themselves to the larger economic structures which influenced these conditions. While not referred to as "immanent critique," this method nonetheless draws on a Marxist analysis of contradictions in order to analyse the inherent dynamism in a particular sphere of language education, and the possibilities for change this dynamism represents.

These instances of immanent critique in the literature are instructive, and show the potential of this method for use in critical ELT research. Perhaps the closest use of the concept to the way it is used in this book is in the previously described work of O'Regan (2021), who uses an immanent approach to identify serious disconnects between ideas around superdiverse translanguaging, and the reality of the economic demands which shape global English use that may prevent its realisation. Simpson's (2022) work also focuses on how qualitative analysis and dialogue with participants can help to surface contradictions and potentially trigger actions that may lead to the resolution of these contradictions. The studies by Pearson (2017) and van der Walt (2018) both use immanent critique as a way of critiquing practices and policy documents, with the aim of exposing internal incoherence in the objects under study, and therefore opening up possibilities for reform. These papers hint at wider sociopolitical structures which may be influenced by this critique, but otherwise focus primarily on teasing out the internal contradictions in the target of their research. Thus, while these two pieces of work are useful examples of immanent critique in action, they can also be distinguished from the approach adopted in this book by their somewhat narrower aspirations.

Aside from the pieces of work described here, there appear to be few studies that explicitly adopt the method of immanent critique in ELT. The studies which have been discussed, however, offer hints as to the productive potential of immanent critique in the field, and suggest ways in which it could be used for the interrogation of widespread academic ideas, pedagogical

practices, and policy prescriptions. However, following O'Regan's (2021) and Simpson's (2022) example, I wish to argue that immanent critique can be used for a broader critique of the industry, and particularly to do so in a way that has the potential to directly influence change. The goal of this book, and of the frame analysis approach it proposes, is therefore to translate this immanent mode of critique into projects focused on small-scale qualitative research, which have ambitions to contribute to social change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to outline the framework for critical research used in this book. The approach to critical research adopted here is grounded in the concept of alienation, and the goal of a critical project is to uncover the conditions of social domination that cause this alienation, and that prevent humans from engaging in the free authorship of their lives. Drawing on the early critical theory of Max Horkheimer, I have suggested that this can be done through a programme of empirical research focused on ideology critique, with ideology understood as sets of beliefs which misrepresent the dominant social structure as natural and immutable, and thus militate against progressive social change. The false nature of ideology, in turn, is identified through processes of immanent critique. Rather than assuming an external position from which one can judge societal failings, the critical theorist must engage in an internal critique, highlighting the rupture between the values propounded by society, and the failings of society itself to live up to these values. By doing so, the theorist restores actuality to false appearance (Schroyer, 1975, pp. 30–31), and thus encourages people to transform society into one in which these values can truly be realised. In this book I will apply this approach to qualitative research in the field of English language teaching.

The Marxist account of ideology is often characterised as one in which ideology is shaped by social structure. In such accounts, it is accordingly suggested that ideological change is therefore impossible without structural change as a precondition. However, the Frankfurt School considered ideology to be a subject in its own right, one not completely determined by social structure. I follow this line of thinking and believe that people can come to recognize ideology through growing awareness of contradictions between dominant social beliefs and their surrounding material and social conditions. Such awareness can prompt critical examination and reflection on beliefs, thus creating spaces in which new possibilities can begin to emerge, and in time, be realized. Through demonstrating that a society or institution is not living up to its own strongly held ideals, both the dominant ideals of a society or institution, and the society or institution itself, are put into question, and the possibility arises for transcending both. The frame analysis approach is a qualitative research method which is designed to contribute to this process. How this may be done is the topic of the next chapter.

Notes

1 See Connerton (1980) and Prosser (2020) on Horkheimer and Adorno's (2002) theories of instrumental rationality and the domination of nature. It should also be noted that there is debate about the extent to which Marx included environmental concerns in his work (see Saito, 2017; 2022; 2024).

2 Mannheim maintained that ideologies were distortions of reality, but broke with the Frankfurt school in considering all systems of thought to be ideological, as each had emerged from a specific historical life process. As Jay (1984) writes, Mannheim suggested that "no theory could arrogate to itself a total perspective, because all were the expressions of specific class positions. Ideology was therefore a total concept applicable to every theory, not merely an attribute of the false consciousness of a minority class" (p. 207). For Horkheimer (1993b), this kind of approach turned discussion of ideology back towards idealism, writing that it had become "the relativity of knowledge" and that "it has lost its dangerousness" (Horkheimer, 1978, p. 75).

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3

FRAME ANALYSIS, IDEOLOGY, AND CRITICAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to introduce the concept of frame analysis, and outline its potential as a tool for conducting critical research focused on ideology critique and social transformation in ELT. I will begin by discussing the qualitative approaches that are connected to and that have influenced the frame analysis approach, focusing particularly on critical ethnography, critical participatory action research, and critical pedagogy. Frame analysis draws elements from all of these to form a qualitative research approach in which the researcher analyses the dominant framing of participants, seeks to identify ideological elements in this framing, and attempts to encourage counter-framing through discussion of contradictions. After exploring the elements which have influenced the frame analysis approach, I will provide a historical treatment of the framing perspective as it has developed in a variety of social science disciplines. I will then supply an account of how my approach was developed, and how the concepts I use differ from previous work.

What, then, is the essence of a "frame"?

A *frame* can be thought of as something akin to a picture frame or the borders of a photograph (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). When taking a picture, a photographer may decide to include some elements of the scene around them in the photograph while excluding others, and the resulting picture may give a very different impression to the viewer depending on what is included and what is excluded. A scene depicting an opulent part of town may give a much more positive impression than one which includes dingy alleys or a neighbouring slum, or even one which contrasts current levels of wealth with the conditions of former residents who may have been pushed out by gentrification. Frames can thus be understood as perceptual constructs which select

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and focus attention on different aspects of the world in order to convey specific understandings and impressions.

Different fields of social science, and different writers within these fields, have used the concepts such as "framing," "counter framing," and so on in slightly different ways from one another over a period of more than half a century. As such, in order to explain how I understand and use these concepts, I will have to operationalize my terms. While acknowledging the use of a framing perspective in work on schema theory (Minsky, 1975; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977; Schank, 1973) and problem solving (Schön, 1993; Block, 1999), I will limit my discussion to the fields which most influenced my own conception of framing. In this chapter I will outline the theoretical development of the concept of framing, tracing it from the early work of Erving Goffman (1974) through to the ways the concept has been appropriated and adapted by researchers studying social movements (see Johnston & Noakes, 2005), and in work on racial framing and counter-framing in the United States (Feagin, 2013). Following this, I will outline how I have (here and elsewhere) adapted the framing perspective for the purpose of conducting ideology critique in critical ELT research. The relationship between framing and ideology will then be explored from the perspective laid out in the previous chapter, and this relationship will be mapped on to the concepts of *master frame* and *counter-framing*, borrowing and adapting these concepts from the field of social movement research, and the work of Feagin (2013). Finally, I will lay out my own methodological approach to conducting a frame analysis, describing how this approach can be used by researchers to (1) identify dominant values and beliefs in qualitative data, (2) conduct an immanent critique which contrasts participants' dominant framing with their implicit understanding of their social reality, (3) highlight disjunctions between the two, and encourage participants to reconcile these, thus negating the ideology which prevents transformative social change, and (4) record instances of ideological shift through an analysis of counter-framing.

Critical qualitative research, frame analysis, and bricolage

The frame analysis approach presented here was developed with the goal of connecting the methods and concerns of early Frankfurt School critical theory to the work of qualitative researchers in ELT. Qualitative research can be understood broadly as the gathering and analysis of data to gain a deep understanding of the beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and values of people and groups. Rather than generating generalizable findings, qualitative research is interested in exploring social realities within particular, limited contexts. The tools of qualitative research can include fieldwork, interviewing, group discussions, and reflective journaling. In addition to these methods, qualitative researchers have developed ways of increasing the validity and reliability of their research, which can include triangulation (using various sources of data

to confirm the results of observations), and member checking (ascertaining whether research reports resonate with the experiences of participants). Frameworks for conducting qualitative research have become quite elaborate, and standards have been put in place which distinguish one approach cleanly from another (Edge & Richards, 1998).

In formulating the frame analysis approach presented here, I wished to develop a more open model of research which draws on various qualitative methods, without being tied permanently to one specific mode of data collection or analysis. I also wanted to develop a method which could be adapted by researchers in a number of ways depending on their particular project and context. As such, the frame analysis approach I propose responds to the call by scholars such as Norman Denzin (2010) to adopt a "bricolage" orientation to qualitative research design. This refers to the appropriation and combination of methods and theoretical perspectives in order to create assemblages that are capable of thoroughly investigating particular research topics and contexts, while elucidating issues of power, privilege, and inequality. In addition to drawing heavily on theory from Marx and the early Frankfurt School, my formulation of the frame analysis approach has been influenced by critical ethnography, critical participatory action research, critical pedagogy, critical discourse analysis, and, naturally, by social research which is concerned with the concept of "framing." This approach resonates with the perspective of scholars such as Kincheloe et al. (2017), who suggest a bricolage approach which combines elements of critical pedagogy and critical research. In particular, they suggest that critical research should reorient itself towards a critique of capitalist society in the vein of Marx and the Frankfurt School. The frame analysis approach was formulated in an attempt to accomplish this, by connecting critical research with the method of immanent critique, and focusing attention on the influence of social and economic structures in the lives of individuals that may lead to feelings of alienation. In the following sections I will briefly outline the key ingredients that have influenced the frame analysis approach, and highlight the elements they have in common.

Critical ethnography

Critical ethnography is an approach to cultural description that is concerned with describing and confronting conditions of disempowerment and oppression in a particular research setting (Palmer & Caldas, 2017; Talmy, 2012). Fitzpatrick and May (2022) suggest that the distinguishing features of a critical ethnography are extensive time spent immersed in a particular cultural setting, and an interest in exposing and contributing to the transformation of inequality and oppression. They state that "if a researcher is not interested in culture, then the project is not ethnographic. If a researcher is not interested in power, then the study is not critical" (p. 32). Being oriented around these two principles has allowed this kind of research to take on a varied, flexible,

and experimental character. In some cases, researchers have drawn on the work of Marx, Bourdieu, and writers such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) to deepen categories of social analysis, as in classic educational ethnographies analysing social reproduction through schooling, such as Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977), and Paul Corrigan's *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (1979). In more recent work, a multiplicity of what Fitzpatrick and May (2022) call "posts" (including postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism) have been used as a theoretical basis for the work.

It is important to note that the term "critical" in this work does not usually have any relation to critical theory in the Frankfurt School tradition. Thomas (1993) suggests that Frankfurt School critical theory is a "theory of capitalist society," while "critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose," and that the two should not be confused (p. 4). Fitzpatrick and May (2022) suggest that some researchers may consciously choose not to label their work as a "critical" ethnography to avoid readers erroneously connecting their work to the Frankfurt School and related thinkers (p. 20). While writers such as Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) pinpoint Frankfurt School critical theory as a starting point for critical qualitative research, it is generally seen as one tool in the ethnographer's toolbox, and rarely awarded primacy. As such, in ELT research it is not as prominent among the methods of critical ethnographers as it might be.

Within ELT, critical ethnography has been used in the investigation of a number of issues related both directly to language education and to the professional experiences of language teachers. Canagarajah (1993; 1999) used critical ethnography to document the oppositional reactions of Tamil learners in Sri Lanka to their English classes and textbooks. Through a detailed observation of lessons, he demonstrated how the learners subverted the images and cultural norms depicted in their textbooks, and reconstructed them into something more culturally relevant and meaningful to their own lives. Bori (2020) similarly explored the impact of textbooks on students, focusing on unemployed students in Serbia. In this study, the goal was to investigate how the textbooks contribute to the reproduction of neoliberal ideology, and Bori argues that resistance should be offered to the possibility of textbooks becoming vectors for the spread of neoliberal ideas. Moving to professional issues, Stanley (2013) investigated the lives of 'native speaker' teachers in China, examining the reciprocal ways in which they both exploited the system and their students, and were in turn exploited by the system, leading to escalating feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, my own research (Lowe, 2020) focused on a university language programme in Japan, and explored how the ideology of native-speakerism could be detected under the surface of the programme through unspoken assumptions on the parts of both the teachers and the programme managers. This was despite the programme appearing on the surface to be extremely equitable and non-discriminatory, These examples show that critical ethnography is an approach to

critical ELT research that is particularly suited to the exploration of beliefs, discourses, and systems of oppression which lie under the surface of a particular schooling/classroom culture or professional community, and which can only be excavated through extensive engagement with the research setting.

Critical ethnography can be either interventionist or non-interventionist. In the case of non-interventionist research, the researcher documents conditions of oppression and inequality, and outlines both their causes and suggestions about how they could be resolved. The purpose of the research report in this case is to influence and persuade policymakers to act on behalf of those oppressed individuals and communities so as to alleviate their suffering. Interventionist forms of critical ethnography are those in which the researcher intervenes directly in the research setting, helping with tasks such as social movement organization and community development. The goal of such research is to contribute directly to social change, and also to indirectly raise awareness of oppression, with the hope of inspiring similar movements elsewhere, or spurring action from those in positions of power. Interventionist forms of critical ethnography have much in common with what is termed action research, and particularly forms of participatory action research focused on social change. It is to these I will now turn.

Critical participatory action research

Critical participatory action research (CPAR) is a research approach in which a researcher works in and, crucially, *with* the community they are investigating to document and challenge conditions of oppression and social injustice (Fine & Torre, 2021). It is closely related to critical ethnography, but places more emphasis on the participatory actions of the researcher. Rather than reporting on conditions of injustice in the hope other actors such as policymakers will act on them, CPAR researchers conceive of their work as being directly involved in making emancipatory change in the context they are investigating. Early examples of this kind of research include the classic study *Marienthal* (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 2017), a "sociography" of largely unemployed town in Austria. This study was conducted by Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld (later a regular collaborator with the Frankfurt School), and Hans Zeisel. The three researchers spent a great deal of time in the community of Marienthal, documenting the behaviours and attitudes of the people in the town, and interviewing the families living there. Through extensive time spent in the research setting, they were able to gain a detailed and insightful understanding of the causes of unemployment and its effects on the community, and the immersion enabled them to pioneer ethnographic methods such as triangulation (although they did not use the term). The authors did not simply describe these results, however. They also worked with activists and community members to disseminate popular accounts of their findings, including on a socialist radio programme, an action that led to the

imprisonment of Jahoda (Fine & Torre, 2021, p. 16). Although Fleck (2017) suggests this was not a true CPAR project as understood today, it was a starting point for later work. Research using CPAR design has included collaborative studies on college in prison (Fine et al., 2021), experiences of living in disadvantaged communities (McIntyre, 2000), and the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth (Fine & Torre, 2021).

In ELT, action research is a field of great interest and relevance for teachers wishing to expand their knowledge and practice (Burns, 2007; 2019). Within this area, CPAR approaches have been promoted by Auerbach (1994), who suggests that this form of research could break down the dichotomy between researcher and researched, and help promote forms of research which in both their planning and implementation would be collaborative and directly useful to the lives of language learners and teachers. Nugent (2020) worked collaboratively with teachers to develop materials and curricula related to the teaching of intercultural communication, suggesting that the creation of such dialogic spaces would be a useful supplement to professional development and teacher education. Song (2019) used a CPAR process to integrate students' life experiences and identities into classes, and thus increase their engagement with the learning material.

As a form of research that is focused on collaboration with participants and transformation within research settings, there are close relationships between the CPAR approach and frame analysis. However, to understand the specific form this transformative approach takes, it is necessary to consider the influence of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy was created by, and is most closely associated with, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. In Freire's work, critical pedagogy is understood as an approach to education based on dialogue between teachers and students. The goal of critical pedagogy is to raise critical consciousness among students; to make them conscious of conditions of oppression in which they live; and to critically reassess the dominant values of their society, particularly those which would seem to work against their own best interests (Freire, 2005). In so doing, it is hoped that education will become a liberating force in society, and contribute to movements that may lead to social change in the interests of the oppressed. However, this should not be understood as the teacher educating the students about their oppression, or enlightening them with the "correct" beliefs. Rather than adopting such a paternalistic and patronizing view, Freire was insistent that both teachers and students must approach each other as equals, and work together to find the contradictions between dominant social beliefs and the reality of the world in which they live (Kohan, 2021). Contrary to what Freire termed the "banking model" of education, in which the teacher sees the students as empty vessels to be filled

with predetermined knowledge (Freire, 2017), in critical pedagogy the role of the teacher is to help put students into "dialectical relationship with their social reality" (Freire, 2005, p. 30), in the hope that they will develop the consciousness required to transform their social conditions. This is an approach based on mutual respect between teachers and students, rather than one in which they are conceived of as existing in a hierarchical relationship. The teacher has as much to learn from the students as vice versa.

Freire's critical pedagogy was strongly influenced by Marxist currents of thought (Gottesman, 2016), and scholars such as Apple (1982; 1990) and Giroux (1988; 1997; 2011) who developed the critical pedagogy tradition in the United States have brought out the reflexive elements of the Western Marxist tradition which influenced the dialogic qualities of critical pedagogy. While early critical pedagogy did not draw explicitly on the writings of the Frankfurt school (Crookes, 2020), scholars such as Mclaren (2003) and Kincheloe (2008) have made these theoretical connections clear in their writings on the subject. There would seem to be strong threads connecting a pedagogical approach focused on the transformation of society through helping people develop a critical consciousness about their social reality, with an approach to social theory such as that of the Frankfurt School, which is focused on dismantling ideology through immanent critique. These similarities are striking, and it is thus unsurprising that writers such as Kincheloe et al. (2017) and Tarlau (2014) have suggested integrating critical pedagogy into social research. Indeed, while critical pedagogy is often associated with the acts of teaching and learning, one key element of the approach is to reimagine teachers as teacher-researchers who are producers of knowledge about their students and school culture. This both empowers teachers and allows them to produce accounts which may influence others, as well as to create dynamic school cultures in which the lives of students can be understood and their needs met (Kincheloe, 2008).

Compared with mainstream education, ELT was somewhat slow in taking up the idea of critical pedagogy. Although radical educators such as Pennycook (1990; 1994) were promoting the idea more than 30 years ago, it has taken time to gain currency in the field. However, recent years have seen a growing interest in critical ELT pedagogy, and it has been adopted by both teachers and researchers in increasing numbers. Work in this area has explored how issues related to critical multiculturalism, gender, sexuality, and race can be integrated into language lessons and curricula (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2021; Nelson, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2004), and this growing interest has led to the recent publication of guides by writers such as Crookes and Abednia (2021) and Paiz (2020), which explore how to practically incorporate critical concerns into language lessons and materials. Critical pedagogy has also been used to inform research projects. For example, Despagne (2021) included elements of critical pedagogy in her ethnographic study of language learning in a Mexican university, aiming to

push for the integration of learners' cultural heritage and local knowledge into language learning processes.

This approach to education is one initially based on a humanistic Marxism, and one which has, in the work of various scholars, been reconceptualized to focus on other forms of critical theorizing such as postcolonialism (Abushomar, 2016; McLaren, 1995; Teasley & Butler, 2020), critical race theory (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Leonardo, 2015), sexual identity (Nelson, 2009; Paiz, 2020), and feminism (Cunningham, 1992; Currier, 2020; Luke & Gore, 1992; Vandrick, 1994; 1995; 1998; Yoshihara, 2015). It is also an approach that has at times been reduced to a somewhat defanged shadow of itself by those who have focused on "'feel-good' teaching directed at improving students' self-esteem" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 9). However, in its early Freirean conception, and in the later works of Apple, McLaren, Giroux, and others, it is a powerful tool for social change based on dialogue, which confronts the dominant values of a society with its lived conditions, and invites students to critically imagine the ways in which their social world could be changed. In this, it draws from, and strongly resonates with, Frankfurt School critical theory.

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an approach to research which focuses on the analysis of discourses in society. The concept of a "discourse" in CDA can be understood as the ideas "communicated by a text" which represent "models of the world" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 20). Through analysing discourses, it is possible to see the ideological presuppositions that are informing the way people and things are talked about, and the messages a text may therefore be subtly communicating to its audience. Critical discourse analysis is strongly associated with scholars such as Hodge & Kress (1974), Fairclough (2012; 2013), van Dijk (1993), van Leeuwen (2005), and Wodak (2002). These writers expanded traditional forms of discourse analysis to focus on the critique of social institutions. Critical discourse analysis is a method of research which lends itself well to ideology critique, as it presents an approach to data focused on the analysis of assumptions which inform and undergird the worldview of a speaker or writer. Through uncovering these assumptions, it is possible for the researcher to reconstruct the ideological framework on which the text is based, and thus the ideology informing it.

While initial work in CDA was focused primarily on the analysis of texts and images, the concept of "texts" in CDA literature has more recently been broadened to include multimodal analysis, and even less tangible aspects of communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and other indications of embodied cognition (Jones, 2021; Kress & Bezemer, 2023), presenting opportunities for the integration of CDA with other forms of qualitative research. Indeed, as Block (2018) explains, the field of Critical Discourse Studies is one which "seeks interfaces between CDA and ethnography" (p. 23), thus offering

the possibility of combining CDA with a variety of approaches to critical qualitative research. There is a clear link here with the analysis of framing employed in this book. Indeed, a form of frame analysis has been integrated into CDA models (see Bloor & Bloor, 2007), and some researchers both of discourse studies (e.g. van Dijk, 2023), and of social movements (e.g. Johnston, 1996), have suggested adopting CDA as an empirical means by which the framing used by specific social movements can be identified (framing itself will be discussed in detail later in this chapter). Despite these points of similarity, the conception of framing and its relation to discourse discussed by these scholars is somewhat distinct from the method of frame analysis described later in this chapter. In my conception of the frame analysis approach, the specific tools of CDA such as nominalization and so on are not used prominently. The reason for this is that in the type of research described in this book, it is not necessary to engage in a close linguistic reading of the "texts" in the environment. Rather, I am interested in qualitative data analysis more broadly, which focuses primarily on different forms of coding (see Saldaña, 2016). This would, however, naturally be no barrier to others interested in more technical forms of discourse analysis from integrating CDA methods more explicitly into the frame analysis approach; indeed, adding and subtracting elements would be completely consistent with the idea of the bricolage.

Drawing these threads together

There are clear connections between the four concepts outlined here, and indeed they have closely entwined histories of mutual influence and cross-pollination (Anderson, 1989). All have an interest in overcoming relations of domination and promoting social justice. However, each stands in a somewhat different relationship to social action. Critical ethnography, while interested in empowerment, is focused primarily on description, with the hopes that this research will lead to action to alleviate injustice. CPAR tries to balance research and praxis, with the researcher participating directly in the community to promote social change. Critical pedagogy is concerned primarily with the acts of teaching and learning, with research a secondary (although certainly not unimportant) concern. Critical discourse analysis is focused on the ways events, phenomena, and people are discursively constructed, and on uncovering what these discourses can tell us about the ideological assumptions from which people are operating. In developing the frame analysis approach, I have combined elements from each of these to construct an approach to qualitative research which is descriptive, participatory, transformative, and grounded in dialogue and the critique of ideology. This approach involves uncovering the taken-for-granted beliefs and values of participants, and contrasting these with the implicit understandings they exhibit of the realities of their social world. By identifying contradictions between these two, the former may be revealed to have an ideological

character. By drawing attention to these contradictions, it is hoped that accepted beliefs about society will be transformed from comforting fictions into rallying cries, with the hope that both the social conditions and their ideological precepts, can be transcended. In doing so, participants can create the conditions to live less alienated lives. The question of how to identify these contradictions, and how to witness processes of ideological rupture, led me to the concept of framing.

Framing and social research

Framing is a concept in social science which has been developed in a variety of fields, and adapted in each case to make it amenable to new subjects and forms of analysis. I will here briefly outline how the framing perspective has been understood and used in the work of Erving Goffman, in the field of social movement research, and in the writing of Joe Feagin on racial framing and counter framing. Following this, I will set out the ways in which I use the terms, and how they differ from their antecedents.

Goffman's frame analysis

The concept of frames was introduced to social research by the sociologist Erving Goffman in his 1974 book *Frame Analysis*. Goffman borrowed his terminology from Ryle (1949), and his approach to frame analysis was meant to help identify "strips" of experience, where "strips" are defined as "any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity" (Goffman, 1974: p. 10). In Goffman's conception, frames are sets of organizational principles that people draw on in constructing their understandings of social events. For example, Goffman suggests that an event such as an argument may be interpreted by a bystander as a real confrontation with serious intent, while the participants in the argument may instead view it as a play fight. It could also be interpreted as a misunderstanding, a deception (e.g. to distract a shopkeeper's attention while their accomplices steal something), or a rehearsal (Smith, 2006). The "primary frame" of interpretation is the one which will be commonly accepted by members of society, absent any other context. Goffman further suggested that frames can be transformed in two ways. Firstly, they can be *keyed*, meaning they can be transformed from a primary to a secondary framework with the knowledge of all the participants. For example, a kiss may be understood as an expression of affection under a primary framework, but take on new meaning if it is initiated under a secondary framework, such as during a wedding ceremony (i.e. it becomes a sign of commitment, or the completion of a ritual). Secondly, frames can be *fabricated*, meaning that a secondary frame can be utilized deceptively with the knowledge of some participants, but not all. A fight being used as a distraction is an example of this, with the conspirators being aware of the fabricated frame, while the shopkeeper

continues to interpret the event through their primary framework. For Goffman then, frames are perceptual filters that can be used by individuals to interpret situations based on background knowledge or belief.

Framing in social movement research

While Goffman was primarily concerned with individual cognitive frames, he also hinted at the fact that frames could be "collectively maintained," and the opportunity to expand an analysis of frames to those held communally rather than individually was soon taken up by other branches of sociology. Starting in the 1980s, the concept of frames was adopted by scholars such as Snow and Benford (1988) in the field of social movement research. These theorists broadened the focus of framing research from an understanding of frames as individual cognitive filters to one in which they are conceived of as blueprints for collective action among participants in social movements (Johnston, 1995). In this area of research, frames thus came to be understood not just as cognitive schemata for understanding situations, but also as collectively held mechanisms for motivating action among groups of people. Furthermore, emphasis came to be placed more strongly on the ways in which frames could be created, adapted, and strategically utilized for achieving goals by individuals and collectives (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

This work began with research studying how different groups involved in specific movements framed issues in various ways to highlight their specific grievances. Social movements are generally organized around the concerns of specific groups in relation to some form of social exclusion or injustice. Examples include the suffragettes, the gay liberation movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement. A major issue faced by these groups is resistance to their goals from wider society, based on the broader social understanding of the issues in question. For example, the movement for gay liberation was hampered by dominant social beliefs that considered homosexuality to be deviant, immoral, and even sinful. More neutrally, it was considered to be a lifestyle choice that was consciously made, rather than an inherent part of who a person is (Valocci, 2005). These kinds of dominant or "official" frames may be intentionally created by states or other authoritative bodies, an example of which may include recent management-led demonization of union activities at Amazon warehouses in the United States. Alternatively, they may be the result of more generally held attitudes into which people are socialized from a young age. As a result, members of social movements often consciously and agentively provide alternative framings on issues in order to garner a more sympathetic reading of the situation, and generate support and energy for their cause. These newly created frames are known as *collective action frames*, as they are purposefully constructed in order to motivate group action against injustice (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Collective action frames are purposefully created by what are known as *social movement entrepreneurs*, who strategically reframe issues to make them more likely to generate support for a cause (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). Within a social movement there may be multiple competing frames applied by a movement, or by different factions in a movement, some of which may be more successful than others in generating support from the broader population. Evidence seems to suggest that whether a frame is successful, and the degree of its success, depends on how much the frame resonates with the beliefs and values held in wider society. An example of this *frame resonance* can be found in documentation of the suffragette movement. Frames which denied widely believed natural proclivities among men and women for certain types of work or family roles were less successful than those which suggested that women's supposedly emotional and nurturing nature would be a benefit in the workplace (Hewitt & McCammon, 2005). In other words, frames which resonated with established values in society were more likely to garner support and thus allow the movement in question to make social advances for their cause.

During what are known as cycles of protest, different social movements may begin to adopt a similar frame despite the movements themselves addressing different issues. These frames therefore must be generic enough to encompass a variety of issues, and to facilitate collaboration between different social or protest movements. These are known as *master frames*, and given their need to encompass the struggles of a plurality of groups, they may be very broad indeed (Snow & Benford, 1992). For example, several groups all pushing for civil rights may adopt a "rights frame," in which the grievances are presented as shared instances of injustice which all the groups have in common (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). While the groups themselves may be pushing for different rights, or for their rights to be recognized in different contexts, adopting the same injustice frame allows them to reinforce each other's messages and mobilize public support for their shared struggle.

In response to a popular and effective framing, other actors may seek to create alternative frames which reconceptualize the issues in question, and thus remove some of their power. This in turn will decrease the profile and success of the social movement. These *counter-frames*, as they are known, may be created by alternative protest movements, by state actors, or by media organizations. An example could be the slogan "all lives matter," which attempted to combat the success of the Black Lives Matter movement. This slogan was an attempt by conservative social actors to establish a counter-frame. In this counter-frame, Black Lives Matter was depicted not as a movement that sought to address injustices committed against African Americans, but rather as one which assigned greater value to the lives of African Americans than to others (Gallagher et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2022). The aim of this counter-frame was to delegitimize the movement through misinterpreting its core message.

Of importance for this study, Snow and Benford (2005) argue that frames can be a useful point of departure for identifying ideology. Oliver and

Johnston (2005) note that framing and ideology are two separate concepts, with ideology forming the content on which framing is based. In other words, when people construct a mobilizing frame, they draw on ideological resources, often in a "scavenging" (Snow, 2004) way, in pursuit of a frame which is most likely to garner support for their cause. These ideological resources are by their nature not observable, as they consist only of cognitive constructs. However, Snow and Benford (2005) suggest that while ideology is not observable, framing is. This is because framing is not simply an individual cognitive activity, but rather is something that is constituted by and expressed in social interaction. As such, an analysis of framing can be used to excavate the underlying ideology on which the framing is based.

Within social movement research then, frames are understood as agentively constructed and consciously adopted ways of presenting grievances to the public. Social movement entrepreneurs highlight specific pieces of information in order to frame things in different ways in order to mobilize participation in their struggle. A frame that is successfully adopted by a plurality of social movements may be called a master frame, while alternative frames that are created in opposition to the social movements are termed counter-frames. Frames can also be analysed for the ideological presuppositions on which they are based.

Racial framing and counter framing

The use of frames and framing has been used in fields outside of social movement research, and perhaps most notably in the work of Joe R. Feagin (2013) on the concept of the *white racial frame*. While Feagin uses the same notions of framing and counter-framing, in his work this terminology is inverted. For Feagin, the white racial frame is the dominant perspective in the United States that the majority white population adopts when interpreting society, social relations, and racially charged incidents. He argues that the white racial frame has been historically constructed through centuries of colonialism, slavery, and discriminatory practices, and is thus deeply rooted in the psyche of the white majority. The frame can be seen to function in the ways that events may be interpreted by the white majority, particularly as they surround flashpoint incidents which highlight and accent social inequalities. Non-white populations have, over the centuries, sought to combat this dominant white racial frame through a process of counter-framing in which they present alternative understandings of situations. An example of this kind of dynamic at play can be seen in interpretations of the overrepresentation of African Americans in the US prison system. According to the dominant white racial frame, this would be explained by excessive criminality among African Americans, usually attributed to issues of culture and family dynamics. In response, a counter-frame has been created that instead locates the causes of the problem in poverty, systemic dispossession, and the over-policing of Black neighbourhoods. For Feagin, the frame exists as construct that

perpetuates racial inequality by presenting a set of narratives which can be used to explain away instances of bias and discrimination as being the result of factors other than racial dynamics.

Frame analysis: Development and concepts

In this book, I work with a notion of frames and framing which is derived from that used in social movement research and in the work of Feagin (2013), as outlined in the previous sections. However, my use of framing concepts in this book differs in certain key respects from their counterparts in other fields. In previous writing (Lowe, 2020; 2021) I began to articulate this framework, but did not always accurately represent the literature I was drawing from. I at times unintentionally conflated different approaches to framing, thus leading to some confusion in how my use of the concepts was distinct from previous work. In retrospect, some of these publications were premature and contained errors, and thus the discussion offered therein requires correction and clarification. In addition to this, my own views have changed somewhat since those earlier works. As such, here I will explain how I use these terms, and how my use of the terms both draws on and differs from their use by researchers in other areas.

In social movement research, frames are understood as something created agentively by participants in social movements in order to mobilize participation. As explained in the previous section, the focus of most framing research in this field is on the effectiveness of different frames on garnering sympathy and mobilizing support for a specific social movement. Frames are constructed or adopted by participants in social movements to convince others of the validity of the movement itself, and thus encourage them to support or directly participate in the movement. However, in the approach to frame analysis outlined in this chapter, I attempt to turn this concept on its head. Rather than examining how frames are used by social movements to achieve specific ends, I am interested here in how framing may be influenced by dominant ideology, and how people may produce counter-frames in response to their ideological presuppositions being challenged or contradicted. Following on from this, I hope to show how an examination of the framing and counter-framing employed by people in a specific setting may be used in the service of ideology critique, and point towards opportunities for emancipatory change. This is a concept I have been developing over a number of years, and in a series of preparatory publications. Each of these publications revealed both strengths and weaknesses of the approach, and while useful studies in themselves, also served as vehicles for self-clarification and the further development of the approach. In this section I will briefly review the development of the frame analysis approach, and outline some of the key concepts which constitute it.

My initial interest in frames and framing came from my PhD research, in which I tried to draw comparisons between the white racial frame, as put

forward by Feagin (2013), and the set of normalized beliefs which led to native-speakerism in ELT (later published as Lowe, 2020). I also became interested in the concept of ideology through an engagement with Frankfurt School critical theory, and was particularly interested in the relationship drawn between framing and ideology by social movement researchers. Borrowing and adapting ideas from this body of research, I developed a version of frame analysis which was focused on uncovering ideology through the analysis of framing. In Lowe (2021), I suggested that through an analysis of the unconscious framing employed by participants in a research setting, it would be possible to uncover the ideological foundations on which such a framing is based. Further, I suggested that it would be possible to witness ideological ruptures and shifts through an analysis of the counter-framing produced by participants in response to experiences which disconfirmed their views. I trialed this approach in two research projects, published as Lowe (2022; 2023), in which I analysed the unconscious framing employed by teachers and teacher trainees around issues of native-speakerism and English as a lingua franca. This approach was successful at uncovering hidden biases, but it was not a directly transformative approach. The researcher was documenting ideology and ideological shifts, but not influencing them. As such, I reworked the model in a study published as Lowe (in press), which included elements of CPAR and critical pedagogy. This reworking of the method entailed attempting to encourage consciousness-raising among participants by drawing their attention to contradictions between their stated beliefs, and their unconscious framing, with the aim of introducing tensions in their minds around contradictions between the values they claimed to hold, and the more unconscious strands of ideological thought identifiable through their framing of situations, ideas, and justifications for action.

This reworked version of the frame analysis approach was close to the version presented in this book, but there was one further adjustment that needed to be made. In both versions of frame analysis so far trialed, I was locating ideology in the unconscious framing of the participants. However, I came to realize that this was somewhat out of line with Frankfurt School critical theory. In this theory, ideology refers to the dominant beliefs held in society, which serve to legitimate the current social order, and thus forestall emancipatory change. It therefore makes little sense for ideology to be identifiable through unconscious expressions of bias. While the frame analysis approach I had developed so far was suitable for a form of ideology critique based around the "neutral" definition of the term, as described by Thompson (1984), I came to realize that this model must be inverted if I was to pursue a research project in the Frankfurt School tradition. Rather than positioning ideology as recognizable in the unconscious framing participants are employing, in this updated version of the approach, I see ideology as potentially residing in the beliefs and values espoused by the participants in a setting, which constitute their dominant framing. These may then be revealed as

ideological through their comparison with the unconscious, implicit understandings displayed by participants of the true conditions in which they live. Framing is thus understood here as a cognitive account of society, represented by the conscious values espoused and vocalized by the participants. This can be contrasted with the implicit, unconscious recognitions of the actuality of society that participants may produce. The role of the researcher is to work with the participants to find and bring these contradictions to a level of consciousness, thus transforming the ideology from a pacifying set of beliefs into a set of unrealized, and possibly unrealizable, values. The goal of such an analysis is to uncover the falsity of the ideology, and thus transcend it.

In the development of this model, I borrowed and adapted certain concepts from other research on framing in different fields, which I will now explain.

Master framing

From social movement research I take the concept of *master framing*. As previously mentioned, within social movement research this is a concept which refers to a way of framing issues or grievances that is adopted by a variety of social movements during a cycle of protest, such as the "injustice" frame which informed both Black liberation movements and gay rights movements. However, here I use the term "master frame" in a slightly different way. In this book, a master frame refers to a dominant frame within a particular research context, one that is representative of the values, attitudes, and beliefs held by participants both in that setting, and also in wider society. For example, in Lowe (2020), I put forward the idea of the 'native speaker' frame, which referred to a frame deeply influenced by native-speakerism and Western norms in language education. While I identified the frame only in one specific context of research, it resonated with other literature and studies in the field, and so was representative of a broader societal frame, with additional characteristics particular to the specific research context of the study.

My use of the term differs quite substantially from the way it is used in social movement research. I choose to use the term "master frame" here rather than "dominant frame" to distinguish between broader, more socially hegemonic frames such as the white racial frame described by Feagin (2013), and the more localized frames that can be identified through qualitative research. There are certainly overlaps between the two, and the latter may even be a localized version of the former (as in the case of the 'native speaker' frame). Despite this, I choose to use the term "master frame" in order to facilitate this distinction. I accept that the way I use the term "master frame" is distinct from how it is used in social movement research; however, as these frames often sit across the boundaries of several settings, I think it is reasonable to appropriate the term in this way.

As noted earlier, ideology can be inferred from an analysis of framing. This is because frames are empirically observable, while ideology is not. As a master

frame is influenced by dominant societal beliefs and values, identifying a master frame is a starting point for critiquing ideology. It should be noted that a master frame is not ideology by default; it is only revealed as such through examination of and contrast with the true societal and living conditions of those who hold it, a point I will turn to soon. If the beliefs which inform a master frame are shown to be ideological, the framing of participants may alter in response, and this may lead to the production of counter-framing.

Counter-framing and resistance

Counter-framing presents opportunities to witness ruptures in ideological thought. As a person starts to realize the gulf between their dominant values and beliefs, as expressed in their framing, and the true circumstances of their social reality which they implicitly acknowledge, counter-framing may begin to emerge. Counter-framing is understood here as a process in which a person begins to acknowledge the problematic reality of the conditions in which they live, and the misalignment of these conditions with their stated or dominant values. These ruptures present opportunities for resistance, as they indicate a growing awareness of the gap between ideology and reality, and thus open up a space in which the participants may consciously work to transform both. Instances of counter-framing are particularly promising avenues for this, because they represent participants rethinking beliefs for themselves after becoming aware of contradictions between their beliefs and values, and the social reality in which they live. This rethinking is not imposed from without, but rather signifies the beginnings of conclusions participants are beginning to reach on their own. While the researcher may attempt to trigger, prompt, or otherwise foster rethinking, the reconsideration itself is something they have no control over.

Frame analysis: Procedures

As previously explained, the early critical theory of the Frankfurt School was focused on uncovering and challenging ideology, and this was accomplished through an immanent critique of society. This form of immanent critique ascertained the highest values of society, and demonstrated the contradictions between these values, and the ways in which this society failed to live up to its own beliefs. It highlighted, in other words, the disunity between social values and social reality. Horkheimer suggested that Ideology consists of legitimations of the current social order, of beliefs which obscured the true relations of domination in society. His critical theory aimed, through contrasting these legitimations with the true social conditions, to reveal their ideological character. In so doing, these values would cease to function as legitimations, and would instead be turned into weapons for emancipation. They would become values to be fought for through radical social transformation, rather than forces validating current social relations. The frame analysis approach is

intended to transpose this society-level dialectical process into the rather more modest context of a qualitative research project.

Through a continual process of immanent critique, critical theory was intended to act as an engine of social advancement. This process is at the heart of the frame analysis approach. Drawing on the conceptions of master framing and counter-framing described earlier, this is a form of research through which the researcher can conduct an ongoing, immanent critique of the beliefs and values of their participants, and their realization in the research setting. Through this form of critique, it may be possible to raise contradictions between the participant's master framing and their implicit acknowledgement of the true conditions of society to a level of consciousness, and thus encourage a rethinking of ideas, or an amendment of actions. In other words, by highlighting how a participant's social reality is misaligned with their stated values, they may reconsider or alter their behaviour or beliefs, thus restoring "actuality to false appearance" (Schroyer, 1975, pp. 31; see also Antonio, 1981). In this method of analysis, the "claims" (the stated values and framing of participants) are contrasted with "context" (the implicit acknowledgement by the participants of the true circumstances of their social world), and thus their beliefs are transformed from legitimations into weapons. The belief ceases to be a screen occluding the reality of social domination, and instead becomes a value to be fought for through social transformation. The restoration of actuality to false appearance is then observable through counter-framing, in which problems in the framing are acknowledged, and the cognitive account of society is brought back into alignment with its experience. These are immaterial changes, focused on alterations of beliefs or values, but they prefigure potential changes in the material world, as participants may act to change the world in accordance with their newly reformulated values. The ultimate goal is to move towards a world where alienating conditions are gradually negated, although this is obviously beyond the scope of any single research project.

I will now provide an outline of the steps that are involved in conducting a frame analysis.

Step 1: Identifying master framing

The first step of the frame analysis approach involves identifying master-framing. As explained earlier, this involves identifying incidents of framing which contain the dominant beliefs, values, and attitudes of participants. It is important to recall that master framing is not an individual cognitive structure, but rather one that is generally shared by the participants in a setting, most often influenced by the dominant values of their society and its institutions. This framing could be intentional or unintentional, and could consist of people plainly stating their values, or making statements from which these values can be inferred. Identifying framing involves

paying attention to people's interpretations of situations and experiences, justifications for behaviour, or prescriptions for action. In each case, attention paid to how a person frames their social world and their place within it should be indicative of their underlying assumptions, which can then be analysed for ideological content.

These assumptions can be identified through a close analysis of discourses. Here, I use the term "discourse" in much the same way as researchers in the field of critical discourse analysis. Discourses can be considered "the broader ideas communicated by a text" which are indicative of particular "models of the world" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 20). These discourses can be identified through processes of qualitative data coding, and triangulation. Coding refers to the process by which researchers examine their data for units of meaning, and thereby identify consistent themes which can be used as the basis for interpretation. There are various forms of coding, each of which is described in great detail by Saldaña (2016). However, as I have suggested elsewhere (Lowe, 2021), in identifying master framing, it may be most fruitful to employ a combination of *values coding* and *narrative coding*. The first of these is a form of coding focused on identifying the "principles, moral codes and situational norms" that people express in their talk (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131, citing Daiute, 2014), while the second explores "the literary elements of stories told by participants in order to understand how they are structuring their experiences and expressing a certain set of beliefs" (Lowe, 2021, p. 312). Through using either of these, or a combination of both, it is possible to examine the framing participants are employing, break this framing down into its constituent discourses, which are themselves representative of underlying beliefs. One specific instance of framing may not be sufficient to identify strongly held underlying beliefs, and certainly may not be representative of the beliefs of a group. As such, it is necessary also to employ triangulation. This refers to the constant comparison of different data sources to see if the ideas expressed exist in more than one place. This could refer to different kinds of data (the same ideas occurring across interviews, researcher notes, documents, etc.) different data sources (the same ideas expressed by different participants, for example), and different temporal points (the same ideas expressed repeatedly at different points in time). Through processes of iterative coding and constant comparison through triangulation, the strength of conclusions can be made stronger and more robust. It is through these processes that I suggest that master framing can be identified. An illustration of this process is provided in Chapter 4.

Once again, it is important to note that framing is not identical to ideology, and particularly not to ideology in the sense it is used here. Framing reveals presuppositions, but these must be tested before they can be called ideological. This is the second step of the frame analysis approach.

Step 2: Identifying contradictions and fostering counter-framing

Once master framing has been identified, the next step is to conduct an immanent critique. Once again, this refers to a process of looking for contradictions between the expressed values of the participants and the implicit recognition of their lived experiences. These circumstances are revealed through information the participants themselves reveal. Here, I suggest that the researcher examine the data not only for expressed values and beliefs, but also for the descriptions or subtle acknowledgements participants give of their social conditions which may not be in accordance with their stated beliefs. The researcher should consider ways in which contradictions between the discourses which make up the master frame may be shown, when logically unraveled, to be potential causes of these contradictions. Once again, this may be accomplished through processes of coding.

Once these potential contradictions have been identified, they can be raised with the participants in the study. This is a process I refer to as *fostering* counter-framing, and it is the element of the approach most closely related to critical pedagogy. In Freirean terms, this is a process in which the researcher helps to put participants in dialectical relation with their social world, through highlighting clashes between their dominant values and beliefs, and the reality of the world which they implicitly acknowledge. This could be done in a number of ways, either through informal means such as spontaneous conversations during periods of participant observations, or through more formal situations such as focus-group interviews in which several participants are interviewed as a group. The specific approach chosen will vary based on the participants and the nature of the project. This process of fostering ought to be ongoing throughout the project, and this requires a regular, iterative approach to coding. In the study presented in the following three chapters this was structured around the time spent with the participants. As this was a weekly event, the coding and analysis of data took place over the days following each entrance into the research setting. A plan was then made for raising contradictions with the participants. The details of this process will be given in Chapter 5, but for now it is sufficient to note that coding for master framing and potential contradictions must be ongoing, and the fostering of counter-framing must be a regular feature of the research process. Fostering obviously cannot take place at the very start of the project, as the researcher will not yet at this point have had time to collect a significant amount of data. It also should not be left until the very end of the data collection process, as this would leave no time for the participants to process the contradictions and begin to produce counter-frames. Rather, it should be an ongoing process that begins when sufficient data has been collected, and continues in a continual, iterative way.

It should also be noted that there are ethical questions to consider. As in all forms of qualitative research, the researcher must be sensitive to the concerns

of their participants. They should not push beyond a participant's comfort zone, nor should they insist on discussing issues which the participant has indicated (either verbally or through other means) that they do not want to broach. This requires a high level of sensitivity on the part of the researcher, and implies the need for them to develop extremely good rapport and field relations with the participants. Absent a high level of mutual trust and respect, this fostering procedure is unlikely to be fruitful.

The response of participants to this process of frame-fostering may occur in very different ways depending on the people in question, the depth of the highlighted beliefs, and the severity of the contradictions presented. In some cases, the fostering process may produce an immediate response, in which contradictions are taken up and addressed immediately. The process may, on the other hand, be extremely delayed, as the participants take time to weigh up their ideas. The ultimate goal of this fostering is to produce counter framing, and it is only when incidents of counter-framing begin to occur that the researcher will know if this process of immanent critique has had any impact on the participants. It may be that incidents of counter-framing are readily observable and available for inclusion in the research report. On the other hand, they may not occur at all, or may occur after the research itself has finished. In the latter case, the descriptive nature of the research may not be able to capture fully the impact of the participatory element, as this may have impacts extending beyond the bounds of the research period itself. In any case, the third element of the frame analysis approach is to identify elements of counter-framing.

Step 3: Classifying responses and identifying counter-framing

Once the fostering process has begun, and these contradictions have been brought to a level of consciousness among the participants, there are several ways in which they may respond. For the sake of simplicity, the following typology has been created to describe the possible reactions of the participants.

- *Frame maintenance:* In this case, there is no discernible response to the contradiction that is raised and discussed. Contradictions may not be acknowledged at all, or they may be acknowledged and then ignored. The frame itself is maintained and undergoes no change or alteration in light of the presented contradiction, and the participant does not mention the contradictions raised again. In short, the master frame is maintained in spite of the contradiction.
- *Frame sheltering:* Here, the participants exhibit an awareness of contradictions, and may make reference to them from time to time, but will continually retreat to their initial frame when questioned in any depth on the topic. This response can be thought of as a motte-and-bailey

approach, where the participant is comfortable to explore new discussion ground (the "bailey") in a relatively casual way, but will withdraw to the more secure "motte" of their initial frame if they feel the discussion is perhaps moving into areas in which they are no longer comfortable. The master frame becomes something of a safe area to which they can return if they perceive the discussion of contradictions has become too uncomfortable or threatening.

- *Frame modification:* In some cases, participants may acknowledge the contradiction between their frame and the social conditions they describe, but their response will not be to abandon the frame altogether. Rather, they will make small modifications to the frame as and when needed to reconcile the contradictions. While this may appear similar to counter-framing (see below), it is a much more piecemeal response which shores up the frame in a way which is superficially plausible, but which sublimates contradictions rather than addressing them.
- *Counter-framing:* This is the most dramatic response. In some cases, the participants may demonstrate a dramatic shift in their framing in response to the contradictions uncovered during discussions. Here, the participants may provide a new way of framing events or ideas that runs contrary to their initial framing, or may explicitly state problems with their initial framing, and the need for change. In both cases, counter-framing signals a shift in the underlying ideological presuppositions on which they are drawing, either through problematizing those ideas themselves or by suggesting that those ideas are unrealizable in current circumstances. There are two further subdivisions in how counter-framings may be expressed:
    - Abstract—participants demonstrate becoming aware of contradictions, and suggest the need for change in the abstract.
    - Concrete—participants demonstrate becoming aware of contradictions, and suggest concrete paths for change.

Of these four responses, naturally counter-framing may be considered the most successful, as it indicates a clear and deep shift in ideological beliefs and commitments. However, it is likely not to be the most common response, nor the most immediate. Indeed, the responses here may not be neatly separable into discrete processes, but may represent different stages along a path of ideological rupture. For example, a participant may begin by frame sheltering, then as the frame becomes untenable, they may begin to modify their frame. Finally, they may abandon their master frame entirely, and begin to exhibit instances of counter-framing. In other cases, it may be that participants demonstrate only one of these reactions to the highlighting of contradictions and never move from it. Movement may also go in the opposite direction, where a participant initially, and perhaps rashly, exhibits a strong counter-framing, and then over time retreats to a modified form of their

initial master frame. The particular journey taken will depend on each participant, and it is not the researcher's duty or position to ensure conformity in the reactions of their participants. Rather, the researcher can explore contradictions with the participants, and allow them to respond in the way they see most fit. While it is hoped that this process will lead to ideological shifts and perhaps even concrete action, this cannot be guaranteed. Indeed, to suggest that such a change could be guaranteed would be to contradict the principles of autonomy and democracy with which the approach is aligned.

Step 4: Longitudinal data collection and the post-intervention development of framing

The potential responses of participants outlined in the previous section are likely to be the result of discussions as they happen in the heat of the moment. Participants may become defensive of their ideas during the initial raising of contradictions, or they may speak rashly and abandon too quickly a defensible position. As such, it is important that researchers do not assume that any responses recorded in initial discussions will necessarily form fixed elements of the participants' thought moving forwards. The participants may moderate their views over time, or they may gradually come to terms with a critique that they initially rejected owing to the threat it posed to a core belief they held. As researchers, we certainly do not want to present one-dimensional caricatures of our participants, and while we must draw the line somewhere with regard to how deeply we can track the development of their thought, it is likely that collecting longitudinal data, or engaging in some form of follow-up study, will allow for a fuller picture to emerge of how the participants' framing may have developed in the wake of the intervention. This not only serves the goal of presenting a more nuanced picture of the views of the participants, but also prevents the researcher from making overly dramatic claims about the success of their interventions, and may provide useful data about both the resilience of ideology and the patterns of thought that lead to the integration or rejection of new information or ideas. This, in turn, may allow for more effective forms of frame analysis to be developed and employed in future projects. A limited, but illustrative, example of this form of data collection is the subject of Chapter 6.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out the frame analysis approach. This is an approach that draws on various methods of qualitative research in order to critique dominant ideology, and thereby lead to social transformation. Frame analysis combines elements from critical ethnography, critical participatory action research, critical pedagogy, and critical discourse analysis, to develop a research method that is descriptive, participatory, and focused on uncovering

and dismantling ideology through immanent critique. By deconstructing the ideology expressed by participants, the potential is created for transcending alienating social conditions. In this methodology, the researcher first attempts to identify the master frame on which the participants are drawing in the construction of their interpretations and understandings surrounding incidents and experiences, in justifying their ideas, or in giving prescriptions for action. From this, the researcher can ascertain the dominant values, principles, and beliefs that inform this frame. Secondly, the researcher can look for contradictions between the master framing expressed by the participants and their more implicit acknowledgements of the social reality they inhabit. Mismatches found here may reveal elements of the participants' value system to be ideological, that is, to consist of beliefs that serve to legitimate the current shape of society while masking its true conditions. These contradictions can then be raised with the participants, either formally or informally, in order to prompt discussion and rethinking. The researcher can finally examine any elements of counter-framing that may occur among the participants, and which may signify shifts in the underlying ideology on which they are drawing. The researcher may finally attempt to track the changing framing of participants over time in order to evaluate the success of their interventions and present a more dynamic three-dimensional view of the participants as thoughtful and agentive people.

In this chapter I have described the frame analysis approach in rather broad strokes. This is intentional—as already stated, the goal of this approach is not to be overly prescriptive, but rather to provide a broad outline which other researchers can adapt, as bricoleurs, to their own research projects and contexts. Nevertheless, it will be instructive for readers to see a concrete example of this process in action. The next three chapters of the book will therefore present a study in which this approach was used, with the goal of showing how, in this particular case, the method was employed.

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4

IDENTIFYING AND EXAMINING MASTER FRAMING

Introduction

In the previous chapter I briefly laid out the foundational principles and processes of the frame analysis approach. However, not much detail was given about how this approach would look in practice, and the descriptions of procedures for carrying out this kind of analysis were kept rather minimal. The next three chapters of the book will provide a much greater level of detail by focusing on each step of the frame analysis approach: identifying master framing, fostering and identifying counter-framing, and tracking the post-intervention evolution of framing. This chapter will focus on the first of these steps, showing in depth how a master frame may be identified through the analysis of qualitative data, and how tensions may begin to emerge within the views expressed by the participants. In order to illustrate these points, data will be drawn from a study conducted over the Spring of 2023 with a class of students studying English and English education at a Japanese university, who had all elected to take a class focusing on the teaching of English as an international language.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the goal of this book is not to lay out a simple recipe or provide a how-to guide for conducting a frame analysis. I do not want to produce a limiting account that sets out strict methodological paths for others to conservatively tread. The frame analysis approach began life as a bricolage that I developed in trying to marry my theoretical concerns with the contextual specificities of the settings in which I was carrying out my research, and my hope is that it will continue to be adopted, adapted, and appropriated by other researchers in their own studies. Rather than marking out strict boundaries then, or providing simple instructions for other researchers to follow, the goal of these chapters is to show how this form of analysis was carried out in one specific case, in order to illustrate how

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research can be done following the principles of such an approach. In doing so, I hope to inspire others to adopt some or all the elements of this approach in their own qualitative bricolages.

The first part of the chapter is focused on the context of the study. It details the specific setting in which the research was carried out, provides profiles of the participants, and describes in detail the methods of data collection. Following this, the master frame of the participants that was identified will be explored through the presentation, examination, and discussion of data extracts in the form of journal entries, excerpts from interviews, and selections from students' submitted assignments. Finally, there will be a discussion of some of the contradictions that began to emerge between the master framing of the participants, and their more implicit acknowledgement of the realities of their social world, as it related to language and education. These will then form the basis of the following chapter, which explores how these contradictions were raised with the participants, and how they responded.

Context of the study

This study was carried out with a class of students studying in a small women's university in Japan. The university is among the more prestigious of Japan's higher education institutions, and particularly of those devoted to the education of women (for more on women's higher education in Japan, see Furuki, 1991; Iida, 2013; McVeigh, 1997; Oba, 2021; Rose, 1992). In addition to being a well-known example of women's education in modern Japanese society, the university has also been instrumental historically in the development of this sector of education, having been involved in the academic training of many of its pioneering scientists, intellectuals, humanities scholars, business professionals, and politicians. The university has strong traditions in both science and the humanities, and entrance to each faculty is highly competitive and selective.

This study was conducted with undergraduate students who had enrolled in an elective course focused on the teaching of English as a lingua franca, a course taught by the researcher. The course was organized roughly around the researcher's own coauthored teacher resource book *Teaching English as a lingua franca: The journey from EFL to ELF* (Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2018), as well as featuring articles by prominent ELF scholars such as Jennifer Jenkins (2015), Henry Widdowson (2017), and numerous others. The course also included data taken from work focused on ELF research in the Japanese context, particularly from Konakahara & Tsuchiya (2020). This material was included to localize the ideas under discussion to the setting in which the course was taught. In this course, "teaching English as a lingua Franca" was understood as an approach to English language teaching that focused on equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to use English in international communication situations. In practical terms, this meant raising student awareness of the variability of English around the world, shifting the

focus of lessons towards the features of grammar and pronunciation most conducive to intelligibility, and focusing on developing skills related to accommodation, communication strategies, code-switching, and intercultural communicative competence (Jenkins, 2014).

The course began by exploring the theoretical foundations of work on English as an international language. This entailed discussion of the history of English, the development of world Englishes, the history of ideas related to English as an international language, the various phases of research connected to English as a lingua franca (ELF), and related concepts such as the 'native speaker,' translingualism, and linguistic repertoires (see Appendix A for a week-by-week outline of the topics covered in the course). Following the first few weeks of theoretical and historical context, the course moved on to potential practical applications of these ideas in language classes, and the students were required to produce a series of activity plans that would address the question of how some of this literature might be translated into classroom practice. These activities were then presented in class, and the students gave each other feedback on their activities before revising them for final submission. The final lesson of the course was focused on examining criticisms of ELF, through the reading and discussion of papers by Kuo (2006) and O'Regan (2014). This lesson was placed at the end of the course for several reasons. Firstly, it made pedagogical sense for a lesson focusing on criticisms of ELF to be placed at the end of the course as a counterpoint to the material covered up to that point. Secondly, from the perspective of the project, I did not want to introduce these kinds of perspectives too early, as I was curious to see if the participants would independently reach some of the same conclusions as those found in the articles (and indeed, as will be explored in later chapters, to some extent it seems they did). Finally, as the course progressed and the students began to express some degree of critical counter-framing, I felt that an in-depth discussion of these two papers would help them to contextualize and add authority to their concerns in their final piece of submitted work, which took the form of a jointly written, dialogic reflection on the topics covered in the class (covered in more detail in Chapter 6—see also Appendix D).

The goal of the course was not to convince the students of any specific set of ideas around ELF, but rather to familiarize them with an area of thought within the field which is growing in prominence and influence, and which they would need to be aware of as potential language teaching professionals. As the course was an elective, and as the university is a very small institution, the class consisted of only four students, two of whom were Japanese, and two of whom were exchange students from Italy. The study itself was conducted over the Spring semester of the 2023 school year, for a total of 15 class weeks. The class met for 90 minutes at a time, and the small size of the group allowed for detailed discussions to take place in each class. It also meant there was quite a lot of freedom to experiment with setting up discussions and fostering counter-framing, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

This study was conducted with a class of students as participants, and the researcher was also the course instructor. As such, the elements of the frame analysis approach related to critical pedagogy come to the fore in this study. Nevertheless, I did not approach this project from the perspective of a critical pedagogue, but rather from that of a participant observer. As Corrigan (1979) notes in his ethnographic study of schools in the UK, "as far as the school is concerned, there is only one major participant role open to the adult researcher—that of the teacher" (p. 11). Corrigan himself rejected this role, feeling that the student–teacher relationship is structured such that students would be unwilling to share certain beliefs with him if he acted as their teacher. However, given that the students involved in this study were adults and had chosen to attend both the university and the class, I feel this was less of a risk than it might have otherwise been.

Nevertheless, I was careful in attempting to develop a relationship of trust and respect with the participants. This was accomplished through the creation of a supportive and encouraging classroom environment, in which as much as possible was done to ensure that the participants felt their views were respected, and that they were safe to share their thoughts. Although it was not relevant to the study, the fact that they were open in discussions with me about sensitive topics related to their lives and identities suggests that this approach was successful. I was, however, still their teacher, and so there was a didactic relationship between my participants and me which may have influenced the views they shared and opinions they expressed. In our discussions, I attempted to display my own vulnerabilities and doubts about the topics in question in order to negate this possibility, to encourage the participants to be open and honest, and, to some extent, to disguise or occlude my own views. However, it is still the case that the nature of this study means that the elements of critical pedagogy in the frame analysis approach are rather forward in the mix. Despite this, it is also a highly descriptive study focused on the changing beliefs and ideological ruptures experienced by the students (and, to some degree, the researcher), and the data provides a useful and revealing illustration of the frame analysis approach in action. It should be borne in mind that this approach is not only intended to be used in classroom settings, but could be put into practice in any other kind of qualitative research project with a similarly transformative set of aspirations. Thus, I invite readers to imagine how this kind of research could be translated into a non-classroom-based research context as they read the rest of this book.

Participants

As mentioned earlier, there were four participants in the class. Two of the students were highly proficient Japanese speakers of English, while the other two were exchange students from Italy who were extremely fluent in English, and had come to the country for the purpose of learning Japanese. The primary language of the class was English, although at some points in the collection of

data, participants chose to express themselves in Japanese for ease of communication or to get across points they felt unable to clearly express in English. In these cases, the Japanese used has been translated into English by the researcher. At times, discussion also took place between certain of the participants in either Japanese or Italian, although this was mainly restricted to clarifying points under discussion, or to topics which were not relevant to the class itself. The participants were given the opportunity to read pre-publication drafts of the chapters and give feedback on them if they so wished, but only one of the participants decided to take up this offer. The participant who asked to read the drafts seemed comfortable with my interpretations of the data, and clarified some points around how the students worked on the final project, which was very helpful. The profiles of the participants are given below, although all names have been changed and any identifying details have been removed for the purpose of preserving their anonymity:

Mina—a Japanese undergraduate student who had initially taken an interest in English as a child, after experiences with media such as Disney movies. Mina studied English throughout her school life, and eventually went on to study higher-level academic English at university.

Riko—a Japanese undergraduate student whose interest in English was initially sparked by a study abroad trip to the United States as a high school student. Because of this trip, she became motivated to study English more intensively, and particularly to work on her speaking skills, leading her to study the subject at university.

Maria—an Italian exchange student who was majoring in Japanese studies at her home university. Maria had extensive experience in studying English from a young age, and had engaged in numerous experiences of studying abroad. She was also active in extracurricular English study and competitions. However, as she became interested in studying other languages and cultures, her use of English declined.

Chiara—an Italian exchange student was also enrolled on a Japanese studies course in her home university. Chiara was taken to private English classes by her parents from a young age, with the apparent hope this would boost her future career prospects. Unfortunately, the fact she did not proactively choose to study the language made it into a chore for her, and she only really began to take a personal interest in English study after quitting her private lessons in late adolescence.

The English levels of these four students were not completely equal, with the two Italian students generally appearing to have more confidence in their speaking abilities than their Japanese classmates. However, all were proficient,

able to express themselves well, and willing to engage in classroom discussions. Active participation in the classroom discussions was important, as these discussions were where the majority of the fostering of counter-framing took place, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the difference in English proficiency and confidence between the students meant that some voices tended to dominate in class, and this occasionally meant that the teacher had to make a conscious effort to invite other perspectives and encourage other speakers to participate. Chiara in particular was very confident in the class, and often had a lot to say on the subjects under discussion. This was welcome, and often helped to enliven discussions, as well as generate interesting perspectives to consider and digest. However, the somewhat unequal levels of confidence and willingness to volunteer ideas between the participants required careful management of the discussions so that all voices would be heard, all students would have a chance to share their viewpoints, and all perspectives would come through in the data. While attendance for the class was generally quite good, there were several cases in which one or more students were absent. This necessarily led to a reduced set of views being shared, and an accordingly limited scope for discussion. This was unfortunately unavoidable, and where these absences may have affected the data, this has been noted.

Data collection

The data used in this study was collected in three main ways. Firstly, fieldnotes were taken throughout the course. These were written on a notepad during lessons by the researcher, and were focused on descriptions of discussions, accounts of critical incidents, or notes regarding other points that appeared significant during the classes. Naturally, the fact that the researcher was teaching at the same time as collecting this data meant that these notes could not be made continually throughout the lessons, but were instead taken when the students were working on written tasks, or at other times when the researcher's attention did not need to be focused on the class. Following each lesson, these fieldnotes were written up into a more formal research journal, in which the notes were organized systematically into more complete and reflective texts, and details were added based on the researcher's recollections. This process of journal writing generally lasted for about an hour, and took place immediately after each class so as to preserve the fidelity of the data to as great an extent as possible. The journal is the source of the data used when discussing in-class occurrences and class discussions. It would have been ideal to audio- or video-record each class, but there was some concern as to whether this could pose ethical difficulties or might interrupt the students' studies, and the idea was eventually dropped. I was also conscious that, especially for

the students who already appeared to be somewhat self-conscious about their English use, the presence of a recorder may have served to inhibit their participation in the class and thus remove their perspectives from the data. In the context of reflective practice, Farrell (2015) has suggested techniques such as leaving the camera in the room for a few weeks prior to recording to naturalize it and make it part of the class. However, as I was collecting data from the first week of the course, this was not a possibility. For these reasons, both pedagogical and research-based, the more indirect method of fieldnotes and a research journal was selected, and it was possible to gain a great deal of very rich data this way.

Secondly, the students were each interviewed individually at the outset of the course so as to collect examples of their declared beliefs with regard to the English language and English language education prior to being exposed to ideas around ELF. The interviews were semi-structured, with some initial topics planned, and follow-up questions provided at a later date in response to answers given by the participants (see Appendix B for a list of initial interview questions). The interviews were also carried out over email. This was done firstly so as to ensure the participation of all the students; Japanese universities tend to have a large number of contact hours and assignment requirements, and so it was difficult to arrange times for the students to meet for face-to-face interviews. Secondly, as the students mostly chose to express themselves in English, I felt it likely that email interviews would allow them more time to consider their ideas and collect their thoughts before answering. For these reasons, interviews were conducted asynchronously over email.

Finally, the work of students was collected and analysed. This work was primarily in the form of activity plans, which formed the bulk of the course assignments. Throughout the course, the students were asked to consider ways in which ideas related to ELF (e.g. communication strategies, accommodation to the listener, intercultural communication skills, etc.) could be incorporated into classroom activities. Several times during the course, the students were asked to think of activity ideas focused on the subject of the preceding lessons, write them up as activity plans (see Appendix C for an example of the format they were required to use), and bring them to the following class for discussion. In addition, the final assignment was a very useful source of data, as it helped reveal some of the ways in which the participants' framing had developed following the main interventions of the researcher. I had initially intended to interview the participants one more time at the end of the course to see how their ideas had changed. However, influenced by experiments I had carried out with using duoethnographic projects in the class (see Lowe, 2018; Lowe & Lawrence, 2020; 2023), I instead opted to set the students a dialogue-based assignment, where I asked them to reflect together on the topics we had discussed, and produce a playscript-like final assignment where they worked together to discuss and reflect on a series of key points related to

course content. This assignment was guided by a set of questions, and each student was required to contribute the equivalent of a page and a half of material to the final project, bringing it to roughly six pages of dialogue (see Appendix D for the assignment information). The final assignment the students produced was extremely rich, and offered deep insights into the ongoing tensions, conflicts, and unresolved questions they were considering at the end of the course.

Limitations

This project was initially conceived of as a classroom ethnography. However, it was brought to my attention that some might object to this characterization on the grounds that the timeframe of the project (14 weeks) was too short to constitute a "true" ethnography, which requires extended time in the field for a deep immersion in the research context (Fitzpatrick & May, 2022). Other concerns raised were whether the class itself could be considered a "culture," as it consisted of only four students, who had otherwise had only limited contact with one another. I initially considered arguing that from the "small cultures" perspective of Holliday (1999), this class represented a constellation of people who, within the boundaries of a particular class, developed a small culture with their own set of shared behaviours (sitting in the same place, working with the same partners, etc.), shared knowledge (in this case, around ELF and related issues), shared in-jokes, and so on. This project would thus constitute a study of that culture; no other would be possible. However, in the spirit of bricolage (Denzin, 2010; Kincheloe et al., 2017), I eventually realized that the label I chose to place on the study was less important than what the study was and what was learned. I therefore have elected to label this simply as a critical qualitative study.

A second limitation must be mentioned regarding the richness of the data. During the class, many beliefs and ideas were expressed by the participants, and with even a book-length study, it would be impossible to fully represent the complexity of opinion and belief present among the members of the class. The study here is also intended to represent the frame analysis process at work, rather than simply to function as a study in and of itself. Therefore, as in all qualitative work, I have had to be selective in which themes to focus on in my presentation of the data. The themes selected were those that were most prominent in the coding, and which also related directly to issues of ELT, ELF, and social conditions affecting language use. These themes were not simply identified in retrospect, but were those which began to take on greater prominence throughout the course as I read through the data, looked for conflicts and contradictions, and returned to the class with these themes in mind in subsequent lessons. The research process therefore began to have some influence on the data, and while this could be seen as a weakness of the project, I would argue that in fact this is how things should be in a project

designed to be interventionist. Nevertheless, perhaps more so than in other forms of qualitative inquiry, when engaging in this kind of project the researcher must be aware of the extent to which they are influencing their setting, and take precautions not to ventriloquize (Fitzpatrick & May, 2022) their participants. This is something I was particularly sensitive to, having noted this tendency creeping into an earlier study (Lowe, in press).

With the background of the study in place, I will now turn to the first step in the frame analysis approach: the identification of the master frame.

The master frame: Language, ownership, and human capital

The first goal of this study was to investigate the participants' conceptions of English as a global language and of English language teaching and learning. The purpose of identifying these conceptions was to collect material that could be subjected to immanent critique. In other words, the conceptions of English and ELT that the students held could be contrasted with their implicit recognition of the social and material realities which could prevent these conceptions from being actualized, thus opening up possibilities for the progressive transformation of both. These conceptions were to be identified through the master framing the participants employed in voicing their opinions and justifying their beliefs, conclusions, and actions. In this section I will outline some of the core elements which comprised the master frame, supported with evidence from various data sources.

The master frame of the participants seemed to coalesce around a series of beliefs and values related to conceptions of language and its relation to ownership and the acquisition of human capital. In discussing these beliefs and values I make mention of philosophies such as liberalism and neoliberalism, reflecting the way these topics have been discussed in the previous literature, and allowing me to make some connection with broader currents of thought which may have influenced the framing of the participants. It is important to note that I am not ascribing a particular philosophical position to the students. Their framing was not a coherent, fully formed statement of politics, but rather comprised a disparate assortment of beliefs which hung loosely together. Nevertheless, if it is understood that ideology can be absorbed from the social, cultural, and political milieu in which people live,[1] it is not surprising that the framing of the students appeared to be influenced by the dominant social and economic systems around them. Throughout the research, the students continually exhibited certain beliefs about language, ownership, and human capital which they appeared to share with each other (excepting some caveats). In the following sections I will explore how these beliefs were expressed, and how they could be identified through the framing of participants. Following this, I will explore some of the tensions and contradictions that began to emerge as the course went on and the participants began to acknowledge realities which seemed to sit in contrast with their professed beliefs.

Discourse 1: The ownership and equality of Englishes

The first discourse that constituted the participants' master frame revolved around the idea of linguistic ownership, and particularly of the equality of all forms of English. Throughout the course, the participants expressed their belief that all varieties of English were equal, and that none had any greater claim to legitimacy than any others. While there were a few occasions when other perspectives were voiced (see later in this section), the participants generally held to the view that all varieties of English were equal.

Writers in the field of applied linguistics have long questioned the ownership of English, particularly when discussing English as an international language. In a famous early article on the ownership of English, Widdowson (1994) argued that English is no longer the property of the Western nations from which it originated, but rather is a common language "owned" by whichever nations and people use it, suggesting that the language 'is not a possession that they [i.e. the native speakers] lease out to others, while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it" (p. 385).[2] From this perspective, as English has become an international language, the 'native speakers' who have traditionally been considered its legitimate speakers and guardians have been required to rescind their title to the language, and admit other speakers as legitimate "owners" of the language too. According to this logic, English can thus be adopted and adapted by communities in other parts of the world in order to develop varieties of the language that are expressive of local identity and culture. It is from this perspective that world Englishes such as Nigerian English and Singaporean English can claim to be legitimate varieties of the language, rather than simply deviations from the norms of what Kachru (1985) terms the "inner circle."

In line with this perspective, the first discourse that made up the participants' master frame was that all varieties of English are equal, and should therefore be treated equally. This was clear from one section very early on in the course, which involved a discussion of world Englishes. In this section of the course, the students were introduced to Kachru's (1985) "three circles" model of English, and given the opportunity to see examples of Indian, Singaporean, and other forms of English that have developed in the outer circle (i.e. those countries where English is spoken as a second language or is recognized as an official language). This is reflected in the following short extract from my journal:

> This week was focused on introducing the course, covering the topic of world Englishes, and introducing the idea of English as a lingua franca. Students were already aware of Kachru's circles, and found the Singlish information very interesting. They seemed to assume from the start that people at least in the outer circle were 'native speakers' of English.
>
> *(Journal extract 14/4/2023)*

As described here, the participants already appeared to be familiar with the notion of world Englishes, and to be supportive of the idea that communities of English speakers should have the right to define for themselves what constituted their own variety of English. This perspective can be seen in the following interview extracts from Chiara, Maria, and Riko, in response to the question "Do you believe any varieties of English are more legitimate than others?":

CHIARA: I don't believe that any varieties of English are more legitimate than others. English is a language like all the other ones, and as such it morphs itself into what its speakers want it to be. How a language is spoken, how it sounds, the meaning certain words can and cannot convey, all of this changes with the times and the people, and it constitutes the beauty and the essence of the language itself.

MARIA: I do not believe so, since the main object of all the varieties is communication, with his own methods, each variety is legitimate to achieve it with no distinction (…). Even if I am interested in a certain variety for cultural reasons, I do recognize that all varieties have the same value since each variety can express certain concepts in a better way than the others.

RIKO: I believe that there is no superiority in language and that all types of English are equal. I believe that there is no legitimate English because different kinds of English can communicate with each other.

In these quotes, the participants made it very clear that each language variety has evolved to serve different purposes and thus they cannot be judged against one another as either more or less legitimate. They must rather be judged on their own terms. In fact, as expressed by Chiara, the participants appeared to view this development and change in the uses of English in each context as reflective of a fundamental characteristic of language, and thus of its "beauty and essence." Similar expressions in support of the equality of all forms of English were made throughout the course, and appeared to constitute a major element of the framing of the students.

The one outlier in answering this question was Mina, who, in contrast to her classmates, appeared to assume a view in which forms of English could be considered more legitimate based on their history and development. This can be seen in the following quote:

MINA: I think that British English can be said to be more legitimate than other Englishes. There are English speakers in many countries all over the world today, and some of them have developed their own unique English, but historically British English is the closest to the origin of English, and it spread throughout the world from there. Although there is no superiority or

> inferiority of each English language, I think it is fair to say that British English has more legitimacy.

In this extract, Mina suggests that the more a country has a role in shaping a language historically, the more legitimacy can be claimed by its variety of the language. This would place British English in a position of greater legitimacy above the Englishes of the outer circle, and Mina's perspective would therefore sit at odds with the views expressed by her classmates. However, later in the same quote Mina also stated that "there is no superiority or inferiority of each English language," and this suggests that the "legitimacy" she had in mind was a more philosophical concept, and one less related to the actual ways in which the language ought to be perceived. Indeed, in other statements, her views appeared to be less strongly held, as she at times suggested that there is an equality among Englishes, as in the following extract from her interview:

> MINA: I do not think there are any excellence in any languages. Since the value of things differs from individual to individual, it is impossible to visualize the value of each language and I think that it is meaningless to do so.

It may be the case that in the initial question, Mina interpreted the word "legitimate" in a different way to the other participants, resulting in this somewhat confused and seemingly contradictory characterization of the relative value of varieties of English. Nevertheless, the contradictory duality of thought expressed in Mina's answers was also identifiable in the more subtle expressions of the participants' beliefs, which will be returned to later in the chapter as we embark on an analysis of the master frame for tensions and contradictions.

Despite Mina's ambivalent framing, the overall attitude expressed by the students, and the first discourse which made up the master frame, was one in which all forms of English are to be taken as equally valid and legitimate. In this, their framing seemed to reflect a positive attitude towards cultural diversity and linguistic pluralism, which is characteristic of a social liberalism (Heywood, 2003). This positive attitude towards linguistic change and variability is reflective of the way these phenomena have been commonly spoken of in the academic literature, particularly in the field of world Englishes. Within this field, writers have historically adopted an attitude of liberal pluralism around language development, which allows for various communities to claim legitimacy for their own varieties of English which are expressive of their unique cultural identities. As Bolton (2006) has written,

> the 1980s saw (…) arguments from Kachru and other enthusiasts in the world English(es) "movement" on the need for a paradigm shift in the study of English as an international language (…) according to the game-rules of an essentially Western liberal perspective.
>
> *(p. 257)*

This aligns the viewpoints of world Englishes scholars with the "liberal view that diversifies and decentralizes language use and promotes language variation as an instrument of sociocultural expression" as against the "conservative, preservationist view that privileges attempts toward homogenization and centralization of language use thereby promoting linguistic unity through careful and conscious exclusion of language variation" (Bhatt, 2017. p. 3). The participants suggested that different varieties of English evolved to serve the needs of particular communities, to express particular ideas and identities, and to allow people to communicate with one another. As such, they generally held the view that no forms of English could claim legitimacy over others, and suggested that all be held in equal regard. In this, their framing was in line with the broadly liberal perspective of most world Englishes scholars.

This primary discourse has important implications regarding the idea of alienation. In Chapter 2, the concept of alienation was described as arising in situations when people are prevented from freely appropriating the world around them for the purposes of authentic expression. The participants suggested that if communities have developed varieties of English that are capable of expressing their particular cultural identities, then these varieties should be valued equally with those varieties that exist in the inner circle. These communities thus have the right to appropriate English to serve their purposes, and to have their creations taken seriously and respected. In this first discourse, the students therefore expressed a perspective on English that envisions unalienated use of the language.

Discourse 2: English as a common resource and a "tool"

The second discourse that made up the master frame of the students was also focused on linguistic pluralism, but moved the focus of attention away from the linguistic innovations of communities, and towards the appropriation and use of English by individuals. The participants in the study regularly framed English as a resource that could be appropriated and owned by anyone, and that could be used as a "tool" by individuals to achieve their ends. In my research journal, I took to describing this as the students' concept of English as a linguistic "commons," drawing on the work of John Locke. Locke put forward a theory of property based on the agricultural use of land, with the famous proviso that individual ownership of resources can be taken "at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others" (Locke, 1998, p. 306; see also Hutton, 2010). I felt that the idea of English as a linguistic "commons" that could be freely used by anybody for their own purposes nicely reflected the perspectives of the students during our classes. This rather loose description of language as "property" bled into our discussions, as can be seen in Chapter 5.

While world Englishes research has focused primarily on intranational communication (i.e. communication within a country), work in the

interconnected fields of English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) has focused more on the uses of English for international communication. Attempts to recognize English as an international language have suggested that it is necessary to divorce the language from the linguistic and cultural norms of the Western countries with which it is primarily associated in order for it to be adopted and embraced as truly international. Baker (2009) writes that from an EIL or ELF perspective, "English-native-speaker pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary choice are inappropriate in lingua franca settings" (p. 567) and that accordingly "native-speaker cultural assumptions and frames of reference are equally out of place" (p. 568). This is not to say that the language contains no cultural content at all. Indeed, Risager (2016) argues that "no language is culturally neutral" because all languages "whether they are used in a lingua franca situation or not, (re)produce culture in the sense of meaning" (p. 33). However, she also suggests that languages are not inexorably tied to one culture, but can be "disconnected from one cultural context and reconnected to a new one" (p. 40). In other words, from this perspective the relationship between language and culture is characterized not by stasis, but by flow, as individuals move into new environments and make use of their linguistic resources in acts of communication and self-expression. As Baker (2009) suggests, from this perspective "a richer understanding is needed of the fluid and diverse relationships between languages and cultures" (p. 567). In the work of EIL scholars then, both the linguistic and cultural characteristics of English are best understood as "situated and emergent" (Baker, 2015, p. 9) in the context of particular acts of communication and expression, rather than permanently bound to the nations and norms of the inner circle.

In line with this kind of thinking, the students appeared to conceive of English as a common resource that could be borrowed, adopted, and adapted by individuals for their own ends. At times, this appeared to be related to jobs and employment (the focus of the third discourse discussed in the next section), while at other times it appeared to be focused more on communication for other purposes such as making friends, travelling, and experiencing the cultures of other countries. In other words, the participants conceived of English in a largely instrumental way, as a "tool" (a word used regularly by the participants) for international communication, which individuals could use for their own communicative purposes or to express their identities. This was a view of English as common resource which is unowned by any specific group, is untethered from its originating social and cultural contexts, and is available for all to appropriate as they see fit (Barrett & Miyashita, 2016; Block & Gray, 2016; Kubota, 2011; 2013; Wee, 2010).

The participants in this study tended to frame their ideas in this way, suggesting that English is a tool or a common resource that individuals and groups can take advantage of for their own communicative purposes, or to express their identities. This attitude can be seen in the following quotes from interviews with two of the participants:

MINA: English is the most used language around the world. People learn English to use it as a tool to do something and learning English itself might not be the main purpose for them.

MARIA: Since English is spoken all around the world, it is now considered as a tool to easily connect with the rest of the world. This aspect is less evident or absent in other languages, which is why I think that people who study other languages are driven by reasons connected with culture and literature.

In both of these interview quotes, the participants used the word "tool" to describe English, suggesting that it is a resource that can be manipulated by its users for their own purposes. This view of the instrumentality of English is strengthened by the comments in both interviews suggesting that English is spoken around the world, and is learned primarily to communicate with people from different linguacultural backgrounds. As Mina suggested, English may not be studied by most people for its own sake, but rather as a way of getting access to other professional spheres or cultural spaces. Maria voiced the same idea, noting that while people may study other languages for "reasons connected with culture and literature," English is studied more commonly as a tool for international communication. These two quotes reflect a general sentiment that was present in the classes. While the students felt that certain dialects or varieties of English could be considered the "property" of particular communities (as in something over which they held dominion), English understood in a broader and more nebulous sense was considered to be a common resource available globally to all, and that it was a "tool" that could be used by individuals and groups to achieve their own ends. This included the creative manipulation of the language by individuals and communities, such as in the case of world Englishes, where creative coinages and the semantic shifting of words have allowed each community to express themselves in unique and individual ways. Once again, there are important implications here with regard to alienation. As explained in Chapter 2, alienation occurs when an individual's ability to appropriate the world around them in acts of self-creation is disrupted. Their life thus takes on an alien character as they construct a world in which they do not recognize themselves. By framing English as something that can be appropriated by all speakers for their own purposes, the students were once again putting forward a vision of completely unalienated language learning and use.

It should be noted that Chiara was keen to distance herself from the idea of English as a "tool," explicitly mentioning in the final group project (see Chapter 6) that she did not see English in this way. This was because of her own experience of learning about the literatures and cultures of inner-circle countries, and her own deep emotional connection to her first language of Italian. While Chiara objected strongly to the idea of language as a "tool," seeming to think this would rob it of its cultural richness and emotional

trappings, she still agreed with the basic framing of English as something that could be legitimately appropriated and used by people and communities to develop their own identities, as can be seen in the following journal entry:

> [Chiara] did, however, believe that most people in the outer circle were native speakers, and so did not restrict the term to the traditional countries, but rather expanded it to any community in which English plays a central role and is important to identity.
>
> *(Journal extract 21 April 2023)*

In this extract, it is clear that Chiara agreed with the sentiment that English could be put to new purposes by communities who use English and consider it important to their identity. She at times also extended this flexibility to individuals, as shown in the following extract:

> Chiara, though adamant that she would never call herself a native speaker of English, allowed that another person in her position could adopt the label for themselves legitimately.
>
> *(Journal extract 21 April 2023)*

While Chiara was quite rooted in her own linguistic identity, and (as we will see later) seemed to hold some strong feelings about questions of legitimacy around being able to claim oneself as a 'native' or a 'non-native' speaker of a particular language, she did suggest that the choice of whether or not to adopt this label could be left up to the individual speaker, thus suggesting a fairly liberal attitude towards the rights of individuals to define their own relationship to a language.

This instrumental attitude towards English also surfaced in the assignments submitted by the students. For example, in one of the early assignments given in the course, the students were asked to make a lesson plan focusing on the teaching of pronunciation. They were tasked with attempting to integrate some of the ELF perspectives they had been studying in the previous lessons into their lesson plan, to translate the theory we had studied into practice, and to explore the extent to which it was possible to do so. In each lesson plan, the participants were required to write a rationale justifying the activity, and explaining their thought process in constructing it. In Riko's plan, the following rationale was given:

> I chose this activity because I sometimes have difficulties listening to English spoken by people from different countries. For example, when I heard British English pronunciation in a university entrance exam, I was very upset and could not understand it correctly because I had only heard American English.

> Also, as a university student, when I started an online English conversation with a Filipino teacher, I found it difficult to listen to him because of his unique pronunciation and intonation. Based on these experiences, I decided to set this as my goal for the activity because I wanted to develop the ability to flexibly adapt to English spoken in different countries and actually be able to use English in a variety of places.
>
> *(Assignment submitted 13 June 2023)*

In this extract, Riko starts with a focus on British and American English and describes her distress upon learning, in the context of a high-stakes exam, that these varieties are different. Following this, however, she quickly moves on to discuss how her experience of speaking to a Filipino teacher inspired her to develop the ability to "flexibly adapt" to different varieties of English, and therefore to use English as a language of global communication. Here, the rationale given by Riko for her activity design echoes strongly the previously given quotes in which English is seen as a "tool to easily connect with the rest of the world," and in which English can be flexibly adapted for international communicative purposes and to achieve specific ends for each user. While it may be argued that Riko could have written this simply to comply with the requirements of the assignment, the fact that she chose to use her own experiences as a justification for the activity suggests otherwise. There was no requirement for the students to relate their rationale to their personal experiences, and she could have just as easily referred to a more abstract reasoning such as the suggestion that teachers focus on pronunciation features which are most conducive to international communication (a point that had been brought up with reference to early ELF research such as that of Jenkins, 2000). The fact she chose to include her own experience as part of the rationale suggests that the reasoning given was genuine.

The belief that English is a common resource constituted the second element of the master frame. The participants believed that the English language is a common resource that is not owned by specific groups of language users, but can rather be used and appropriated by anyone who falls under its jurisdiction. In the case of a global language such as English, this could potentially include everyone on the planet. This also implied that English is something that can be used by all speakers and groups for their own purposes, and that such uses are no less legitimate for any alterations or innovations made to the language by these speakers. Once again, this framing seems to reflect an ethic of social liberalism which takes the individual as the principal unit of society, and celebrates "moral, cultural, and political diversity" (Heywood, 2003, p. 36).

Discourse 3: English learning as an investment in human capital

A final element of the master frame that seemed particularly salient revolved around the reasons the participants gave for why people learn English. In

contrast to the previous two points, this final discourse appears more closely aligned with ideas related to neoliberalism, and particularly with the conception of the individual as an entrepreneurial subject competing in a global marketplace. As with the previous two discourses, the participants did not converge on a unified position regarding this question, but rather presented a constellation of perspectives which seemed to orbit around the same general principle behind reasons for English language learning. This lack of coherence should be expected given that each of the participants had their own unique reasons for learning the language, and had in many cases chosen to do so for reasons of cultural or personal enrichment. However, one reason for English learning which emerged regularly in their interviews and during lessons revolved around questions of social status and economic advancement. They suggested that English learning was, for the majority of people, something that is done in order to increase their social status, improve their employment prospects, and provide them with an asset that can be used to enhance their economic position. They also appeared to view this as a positive thing, seeing English learning as a way of building social status. This can be seen in the following quotes taken from each of the participants' interviews:

MINA: It differs people to people, but in Japan, it might be common for people to start learning English in order to improve their social status.

RIKO: I think that most people want to improve their English and advance their careers. These days, English skills are considered important as globalization progresses. I believe that people with good English skills are valued in all settings and are more likely to be promoted in the workplace.

CHIARA: I think most people approach English with job opportunities in mind.

MARIA: Nowadays the main purpose of learning English may be the relevance that it has in the academic and business environment. Moreover, since the world is more and more connected and travelling in different countries is now part of our routine, English has become a useful passport that makes life easier for travellers and host countries.

In these four quotes, the participants connected English learning with advancements in social status, and particularly with expanded job opportunities, echoing arguments made by Duchêne and Heller (2012) and Holborow (2015). Both Riko and Maria explicitly connected this with the topic of globalization, suggesting that in a globalized world, English skills are essential for people to take advantage of economic opportunities. The participants talked about this as a description of the reality of English learning, but at the same time spoke about this dynamic with a positive valence, indicating a favourable attitude towards the role English plays in social and economic advancement. Indeed, Maria went so far as to call English a "passport" for

success in travel, as well as in academic and business environments. It was thus very clear that for all of the participants, English skills were understood to be learned by people globally primarily for the economic opportunities and possibilities for social advancement that such skills can potentially afford them. They also saw this as a positive outcome of English learning.

In short, English learning was seen by the participants primarily as an investment in human capital (Becker, 1993). Human capital can be defined as "the collection of productive skills embodied in a person that can be used to generate earnings in the labor market and to augment household's consumption options" (Weiss, 2015, p. 27). In other words, the students conceived of language learning as a process in which individuals invest in a skill which can increase their chances for employment and mobility (see also Kubota, 2011). English language learning was therefore understood as a form of human capital accumulation focused primarily on the development of job prospects and socioeconomic advancement. This placed the participants' ideas squarely within a neoliberal conception of English, which sees the language as a vehicle for labour mobility, economic opportunity, and increased productivity (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012). This was the final discourse which constituted the master frame of the students.

Summary of the master frame

Bringing together the preceding three points, it appears the participants were operating from a master frame in which English was seen as a common resource, over which all its users had an equal claim. This can be seen in their expressed beliefs around notions of language, ownership, and human capital. Firstly, the participants believed in the equality and equal validity of all varieties of English around the world. Secondly, they believed that the English language is a common resource, which can be reshaped and used as a tool by all of its speakers. Thirdly, they suggested that English is learned primarily for the purpose of improving an individual's social status or employment prospects, and that English acts as a key to unlock new fields of work, to create opportunities for academic and business interaction, and to develop as a professional in a globalized world. This was a framing that was consistently expressed through the interviews conducted with the participants, and through our class discussions. The first two of these discourses appeared to be influenced by socially liberal beliefs around tolerance, diversity, and cultural pluralism, identifiable in their support of the validity of linguistic change and variation, and the ability of communities and individuals to legitimately appropriate the language for their own purposes of self-expression. The third belief was more expressive of neoliberal ideas in which language learning (and education more broadly—see Becker, 1993) is understood primarily as a way of accumulating human capital for the purpose of participating in global employment markets (Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Holborow, 2012; 2015). The

participants thus shared a framing of seemingly unalienated English language learning in which individuals and communities could freely and experimentally appropriate the language for their own purposes of identity development, cultural expression, and career advancement. This is not necessarily a coherent philosophy (indeed, I aim to argue that it wasn't), as it consisted of the disparately expressed beliefs of the participants which arose through discussion and debate. These were not systematically ordered or expressed beliefs, but rather the views of the students that could be inferred from their framing of the issues around language under discussion.

As each group comprises individuals, the master frame is never going to be representative of a fully fledged and carefully assembled political philosophy. Rather, it functions as a relatively accurate characterization of the general beliefs held by a group, which are identifiable in their shared framing. The beliefs outlined in this section were those which were relatively stable between the participants, and which were identifiable in interviews with the participants, in class discussions, and in their written assignments. These three discourses therefore constituted the dominant frame informing the interpretations and judgements of the participants regarding English and English language teaching and learning. This framing is representative of a justifying logic that presents English language learning, and the global predominance of English more broadly, as a positive force that can provide people with opportunities for personal and professional advantage through learning a skill which can be used for international work and travel.

However, over time contradictions began to emerge between this relatively stable master frame, and the more implicit acknowledgements on the part of the participants that this framing did not necessarily reflect the true social reality in which they lived. This in turn pointed to internal incoherence in the master frame itself, which presented potential avenues to explore collaboratively with the participants. It is these tensions that I will address in the next section.

Emerging contradictions

I have argued in the previous sections that the framing of the students was one based around conceptions of language as related to notions of ownership and capital. This was seen primarily in the ideas expressed by the participants that all varieties of English are equal, that the English language is a common resource shared by all, and that individuals primarily learn English for the purposes of their own advancement in terms of their social status or career prospects. Nevertheless, the students also exhibited some views that seemed to contain elements which stood in tension and contradiction with these expressed values, the appearance of which showed up internal tensions in the master frame itself. These were not always declared beliefs, in the way the discourses comprising the master frame were, but were often rather implicit, almost unconscious expressions of understandings regarding the way language use may be constrained by larger social facts and material realities.

The first of these revolved around the idea of ownership of the language. While the participants expressed the general belief that English was a common resource—a tool that could be used by people to communicate globally and to express their identities and unique cultures—they also seemed to suggest that in reality this was perhaps not entirely the case. While in general the students expressed an attitude that English was primarily a common resource, or a tool that could be used by everyone, they also seemed to feel that languages in general, English included, could be owned by a group or consortium of speakers, who may lay claim to them through birthright. They expressed, in other words, a notion of language as property that is associated with what we might call the "mother tongue–native speaker tradition" (Hutton, 2010, p. 641), which stands in contrast to the liberal point of view they had expressed regarding the positioning of English. The mother tongue–native speaker tradition is one in which

> a language is the collective property of its native speakers, understood collectively as a *Volk* or *ethnos* ("people") […] defined as a historically continuous descent group, which owns a distinct language and has a defined territory. Its language and culture are part of its collective property.
>
> *(Hutton, 2010, pp. 640–641)*

This would seem to contradict rather strongly the notion that English is a common resource and a tool that can be used by anyone to achieve their own purposes, as the students had expressed very clearly in their framing. In contrast, this "native-speakerist" (Holliday, 2005) approach to language ownership is one which reflects a much more exclusive and chauvinistic attitude; an attitude that is still prevalent in English language teaching (Samuell, 2023), and which has been critiqued since at least the 1980s (see Coulmas, 1981; Paikeday, 1985). Despite this, it is one which is still dominant globally. The participants, while valorizing the broadly liberal notion of English as a common resource, and variations of English as therefore valid and legitimate, seemed tacitly to recognize this reality in our classroom discussions.

The first indication of this occurred in a discussion in the first lesson of the course. In this discussion, we were examining the concept of the 'native speaker' and the development of world Englishes. The discussion had reached a point at which we had attempted to connect the two concepts together, and explore whether it was possible to draw a line that neatly separated those people we could consider 'native speakers' of English from those we could not. The following brief extract in my journal illustrates the emergence of the first tension:

> Chiara actually mentioned early on that of course many people in India were 'native speakers' of English, and then backtracked, seeming to think this claim would offend me!
>
> *(Journal extract 14 April 2023)*

In this interaction, Chiara first shared an opinion that was in line with the dominant framing of the class—that English is not the exclusive property of those in the inner circle, but can rather be appropriated and owned by communities in other parts of the world, and therefore that those in other countries who speak it as a first language can lay claim to being 'native speakers.' However, my presence in the class appeared to dissuade her from stating this view, as she quickly "backtracked," and even gave me an apologetic smile and a quiet "sorry!" for having stated as much. What this seemed to indicate to me was an implicit acknowledgement that whatever her views on the speakerhood of various populations and the ownership of English, these were likely to be heavily contested by those who held a more native-speakerist position. It further seemed to suggest that she understood that some might feel threatened by their ownership rights to the language coming under challenge.

This attitude was further evident in other discussions which took place early in the course. In the following extract from my journal, I describe another interaction with Chiara in which she expressed her relationship to English:

> Chiara was, of the three, the most willing to draw hard lines between native and non-native, and also the one who most explicitly connected the concept of the native speaker to culture. She suggested that she is almost equally proficient in Italian and English, and uses it as a dominant language, but that she would never call herself a 'native speaker' of English, because it felt "rude" to her. Almost as if she saw the claiming of the term as a form of appropriation.
>
> *(Journal extract 21 April 2023)*

This was an orientation reflected in the attitudes of the other class members. While they seemed supportive of the ability of others to self-identify as 'native speakers,' especially when those speakers came from outer circle countries, they seemed to suggest that to use the term themselves was somehow illicit, and represented a form of appropriation. This attitude was exhibited despite their high levels of proficiency in the language, and their stated beliefs that as a global language, English is a tool available to all. There is no direct contradiction between the participants holding this belief while rejecting the label 'native speaker' for themselves, but the reasons they gave for doing this seemed strongly connected to a tacit understanding that the language is still considered the property of specific groups—those who claim the title of 'native speakers.'

Ideas around language are not *material* in the sense of being concrete, physical objects. However, the students expressed a recognition of what Durkheim (1982) called a "social fact"—that is, a way of thinking, behaving, or feeling which is "external to the individual consciousness and (…) works through coercion, imposing itself on us regardless of our individual will" (Riley, 2015, p. 91; see also Adams & Sydie, 2002). The idea that ownership

of a language is related to a specific culture is one which an individual may find hard to resist, and one which is so widely subscribed to that they may fear retribution by denying it. This perhaps was the case when Chiara backtracked on her claims about the ownership of English, seeming to worry she might cause offense. Social facts, while not material as such, have concrete effects in terms of constraining action and conditioning expression. The students thus appeared to recognize that whatever their conception of the ability of individuals or communities to appropriate English, any attempts to do so would probably be constrained by dominant beliefs and attitudes around the ownership of English.

This confusion further deepened when we discussed issues of discrimination against those who are classified as 'non-native speakers.' We looked at examples of job advertisements for English language teaching positions which specified 'native speakers' only, or specified unequal employment conditions for professionals based on speakerhood (common issues in the field—see Houghton & Rivers, 2013; Inoue & Anderson, 2022; Kiczkowiak, 2020; Kunschak, 2018; Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022; Maganaka, 2023; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Miyazato, 2009; Paciorkowski, 2021; Panaligan & Curran, 2022; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010; Smart, 2022; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011). To provide examples, I shared my own experiences with being hired on the basis of my 'native speaker' identity (Lowe, 2024; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016). The students seemed appalled with this state of affairs, and also suggested some ways in which it might limit their own professional lives in the future if they intended to go into fields of work such as teaching or translation. Once again, this seemed to indicate a recognition that in the field of ELT (and other language-related fields), the purported speakerhood of individuals is still of great importance and is directly tied to the ability of speakers to both enter and succeed in the profession.

In other words, while the participants' master framing was of English as a common resource and a tool for international communication, they seemed to recognize that English is still often *seen as* the collective property of the members of 'inner circle' nations, and that this places limits on the extent to which it can actually be appropriated or used by those who are not part of those groups. This highlighted tensions between "notions of language as a form of collective ethno-national identity on the one hand, and language as a thing individuals trade in the expectations of various forms of 'profit' in the market on the other" (Simpson & O'Regan, 2021, p. 10). In particular, the participants suggested that this would have an impact on the ability of people to enter language-related employment fields, especially those in which the idea of speakerhood is used as a proxy for legitimate and authentic knowledge of the language, such as is often the case in language teaching (Lowe & Pinner, 2016).

This focus on employment limitations seemed to add an increased level of tension, as it appeared to draw out another contradiction. While the participants were very clear in stating that English learning functions as a boost to

one's status, employment prospects, and human capital, they also appeared to suggest that at least in some fields, the learning of English had to take on particular forms. If one wants to succeed in many fields, one must study the form of English acceptable in those fields. Thus, the forms of English learned and used by students are heavily influenced by those demanded or sought after by employers, and in some cases mandated in government policy. When I asked the students if employers would value all forms of the language equally, the reaction was quick and negative, as shown in the following journal extract:

> Maria immediately said no, that it was impossible (…) She particularly focused on employers, stating that people will be judged on the basis of their ability to meet the needs of the job market, so whether they identify as something will necessarily be less important than whether others consider them skilled in the way demanded by the market.
>
> *(Journal extract 12 May 2023)*

This was a perspective echoed by the other participants in the class. They seemed very aware that the forms of English most people learned would be limited by the demands of employers and the market, and thus that most people's appropriation of English was for this reason neither free nor self-directed. This would seem to highlight contradictions between various elements of the master frame outlined earlier. How can English be a common resource to be freely appropriated and used, when only the forms spoken in the inner circle are deemed legitimate? How can all Englishes be *equal* when some forms of English are more *valuable*? How can English be freely appropriated and used as a tool, when most learning of the language is necessarily directed towards the forms that will be most valuable in the job market? As I reviewed the data week on week, these appeared to me to represent increasingly serious contradictions between the master framing of the students and their recognition of the social facts and material realities that influence English language learning and use. Their master frame represented what can be considered a justifying logic of English learning, at least as they understood it, while their declared understanding of the field and its current functioning revealed what seemed to be internally contradictory elements in this logic.

The ideas raised here appeared ripe for immanent critique, as they lay directly at the point where it was possible to witness the gap between ideas and reality (Held, 1980). The master framing of the students reflected some of the most prominent beliefs and values used by the students to justify the activity of English language education, namely, that English is a global language available to all as a resource, that all forms of English are equal, and that English learning is important for people to succeed in the increasingly globalized worlds of business, academia, tourism, and politics. However, as the statements of the participants seemed to demonstrate, there are currently

significant barriers to these values and beliefs being practically realizable in the world. This would seem to chime with the work of applied linguists such as O'Regan (2021), who has argued that the current focus in ELT on the applications of emancipatory ideas such as translanguaging theory are at odds with the historical development of English as a global language, and with the economic pressures that strongly influence the forms of the language considered "legitimate" for employment. Indeed, Jenkins (2000) has noted that even in term of first language use, non-users of Standard English "are discriminated against in many written and certain formal spoken contexts" (p. 204). While ELT organizations are keen to promote the image that English is a global communication tool and a truly international language, it still appears to be the case that standard forms of the language are dominant in many professional spheres, and that in practice the ownership of English is still associated with 'native speakers' and inner-circle nations. This is reminiscent of the argument made by Hill (1967; see Lowe & Smith, 2020), who argued that a form of "neutral" English should be developed for learning and teaching in former British colonies. This would avoid (in Hill's words) "killing the goose that lays the golden eggs" (p. 95), by which he meant the cultural and economic advantage that comes from having one's national language function as the global standard. This understanding was discernible in the more unconscious, implicit admissions among the participants that for all we may desire English to be a global communication tool, available for all to freely appropriate, it seems that currently this is not the case.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide an illustration of the first step in the frame analysis approach; the identification of the master frame. To reiterate, the master frame, as understood here, is the dominant frame existing within a social setting, and one that is representative of the underlying beliefs in that setting. The master frame represents the dominant ways in which a group of people interpret the world around them, justify their actions, or contextualize their claims. While the master frame may not be completely stable between all members of a group (and we should not expect it to be, given each individual draws on their own idiosyncratic experiences and circumstances in constructing their frame), it represents a relatively homogenous set of beliefs that can be taken as socially widespread, if to some degree localized to the specific research setting in question.

Drawing on data from a qualitative study of four undergraduate students studying on a course about the teaching of English as an international language, it was possible to identify a shared master frame influenced by discourses related to language, ownership, and human capital. This was most clearly identifiable in the three discourses I set out earlier in this chapter. The first of these was the idea that all forms of English (including dialects,

regional variants, and global varieties such as Nigerian or Singaporean English) are equally legitimate, with none held in higher regard than any others. Secondly, the participants suggested that English is a tool for international communication, and is not the property of any one nation or ethnic group. Rather, they framed English as a common resource, available to all, and free for anyone to adapt for their own communicative and identity-related purposes. The final salient discourse was focused on the reasons most people have for learning English, with the participants stating that the majority of English learners engage in study of the language to boost their social status or employment opportunities. These three discourses together comprised the master framing though which the participants filtered issues and questions in our discussions.

However, as the course progressed, the participants also seemed to express more implicit, at times almost unconscious, understandings that placed certain elements of this frame in tense contradiction both with the realities of language learning in the world, and with other elements of the frame itself. For example, it became clear that while the participants viewed English as a common resource that could be used and adapted by anyone, they also seemed to suggest that English was generally considered to be the property of 'native speakers,' who had a claim of true ownership over the language. Further, while the participants themselves described all Englishes as being *equal*, they also implied that some forms of English are more *valuable* than others, as those forms are more acceptable for things such as employment or academic study. Their depiction of people being able to engage in the unalienated learning and use of English began to be placed in doubt as contradictions and tensions began to reveal themselves. In analysing this data as the project progressed, I felt that these emerging tensions offered opportunities for collaborative immanent critique, which I began to implement over the course of the semester. The ways in which this process was carried out are the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1 I am not making a specific claim about the mediation of ideology here—see Chapter 7 for a discussion of this issue.
2 It should be noted that Widdowson's ideas about the ownership of language have been challenged by several scholars, such as O'Regan (2021). I will not discuss these points now, because my aim in this section is to document and interpret the students' framing, which seemed to reflect ideas close to those expressed by Widdowson.

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5

ADDRESSING CONTRADICTIONS AND FOSTERING COUNTER-FRAMING

Introduction

In the previous chapter I laid out the master frame displayed by the participants in this study. In my analysis of the framing employed, I suggested that their worldview was informed by a foundation of beliefs related to language, ownership, and human capital. This framing was characterized by three primary discourses evident in their interviews and throughout the course. These discourses were: (1) that all forms of English (dialects, varieties) are equal, and that no Englishes are to be valued above any others; (2) that English is a common resource available to all speakers—a tool that can be used by anyone for their own communicative purposes and to express their identities; and (3) that the main purpose of learning English for most people is as an investment in their human capital, which they can then leverage into greater employment opportunities and higher degrees of social status. These discourses were identified through the participants' description of English as a "tool" for communication, their generally held and stated belief in the equal validity of all forms and uses of English, and their shared claim that the majority of people worldwide learn English for extrinsic social or economic reasons, rather than for intrinsic reasons of identity or interest in culture, as may be the case with other instances of language study. While they did acknowledge that some people study English owing to an interest in literature or culture, they converged on the belief that this represented a small minority of the total number of learners. In my reading, these three foundational discourses were influenced by socially liberal ideas around diversity and pluralism (Heywood, 2003) with regard to language and ownership, and neoliberal ideas of language learning as a way of developing human capital (Becker, 1993).

This was an amalgam of beliefs which seemed, on the surface, to be somewhat stable. The students put forward an ideal which seemed to represent a

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completely unalienated approach to English education—all Englishes are equal, English is a tool which can be appropriated by anyone, and the learning of English can be a way of gaining social advancements. This is a set of beliefs familiar to many language teachers, and one which may seem unobjectionable and unproblematic. Indeed, I have at various points in my professional life (including, to some degree, the present) held to each of these beliefs. However, over the course of the data collection period, it became increasingly apparent that these discourses sat somewhat uncomfortably together, and frictions began to emerge. In the previous chapter I identified some of the tensions and apparent contradictions between the master framing expressed by the students and the social and material realities they seemed to acknowledge. This in turn led back to a questioning of the elements that comprised the master frame itself. While the participants viewed English as a common resource available to and adaptable by all, they also seemed to recognize at various times that English is in fact still viewed by many as the property of its 'native speakers'—i.e., speakers belonging to inner circle countries (Kachru, 1985)—and that command of standard forms of the language is still necessary for entry to, and success in, various employment sectors. Similarly, the participants expressed a belief that all forms of English were equal and legitimate, while at the same time acknowledging that some forms of English are clearly more valuable than others as an investment in their human capital. Their stated belief that most people learn English for economic advancement or improved social status added further urgency to these questions, as this suggested that most English language learning would accordingly and necessarily be focused on learning standard forms of the language which would grant access to the social and economic spheres in which an individual can advance or enrich themselves. From comparing the master framing of the students to the implicitly (or at times overtly) acknowledged realities of the world in which they live, it seemed clear that there were numerous contradictions available for discussion. In this chapter I will outline how I went about raising these potential contradictions with the participants.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there are several approaches a researcher may take when attempting to address contradictions and foster counter-framing. These approaches may be either *immediate* or *delayed*, and may generate a variety of responses from those involved, some of which may signal rethinking among the participants, while others may trigger a variety of reactions, which I will explore and exemplify in some detail (see the typology of possible responses given in Chapter 3). In the following sections, I will discuss both immediate and delayed approaches to addressing contradictions, and provide examples from the research conducted for this book of both being attempted in practice. I will also outline some of the various reactions from the participants to these attempts, in order to illustrate the unexpected and complex processes of rethinking and negotiation which may occur when these contradictions are highlighted. I will also provide an example, briefly, of how my own thinking was impacted through discussion with the participants, so as to

illustrate the collaborative nature of the frame analysis approach, and the multidirectional ways in which discussion of emergent contradictions may reveal ideological thought, and point towards paths for emancipatory change.

Immediate approaches to addressing contradictions

Immediate approaches to addressing contradictions and fostering counter-framing involve the researcher attempting to highlight contradictions as they occur in real time during the course of data collection and observation. Rather than waiting until they are "officially" coded in the data at some later point, the researcher can address a seeming contradiction as it arises in the moment during data collection itself. For example, if a participant makes a statement that appears to contradict something they had previously said (either during the same period of data collection or at some point earlier in the study), the researcher may choose to highlight that contradiction in the moment in order to spur rethinking and prompt a response. Another example may be a case in which two participants make contradictory statements, which the researcher can then highlight for discussion. Again, these two statements may be made within a very short space of time, or one may be made at some time removed from the other. The important point is that the researcher is highlighting the contradiction as it arises, rather than addressing it in some planned way later in the project.

It should be remembered that this does not refer to *any* contradictions (for example, differing accounts of what the participants had done together at the weekend), but specifically to those contradictions which seem to highlight disconnects between the expressed master framing of the participants, and their recognition (either implicit or stated) of their social and material reality. This may, in turn, point to inconsistencies and internal tensions with the discourses that make up the master frame itself, thus revealing its ideological nature. When such contradictions become apparent, a researcher may choose to address them in the moment in order to see what the response will be, and whether it induces recognition or rethinking. This does not need to be the only occasion on which the particular contradiction in question is addressed, and it may form only the first tentative step in a process of discussion and negotiation which is ongoing throughout the data collection period. It may be the case that this moment is the only occasion on which a contradiction is addressed. However, if the contradiction is genuinely present, it is likely that examples of it being expressed will reoccur at various points during the project, allowing for more opportunities to discuss it. Indeed, it may be the case that an instance of a contradiction, noticed and addressed, is the catalyst for a larger ideological rupture that is developed and expanded on over the course of the project. It may be addressed multiple times in the following weeks, but the initial instance in which a contradiction is immediately acknowledged and questioned may be the spark which leads to a more

intense and focused interrogation of the issue at a later date. The frame analysis approach is intended to be iterative and ongoing, and thus while a research report can abstract out particular moments for presentation and analysis, these should be understood as part of a cyclical and continuous process of questioning and exploration, and should be presented as such.

In this section I will provide two examples of how contradictions were noticed and were immediately addressed during the course of the study. I will also describe and discuss the reactions of the participants to these contradictions. These are not the only occasions on which immediate attempts were made to foster counter-framing, but they are clearly illustrative of the process at play, and are thus the most productive to share as examples of the frame analysis approach in practice.

Example 1: Questioning the role of English as a "tool"

The first instance of an immediate approach to fostering counter-framing could be found in week 6 of the course, and focused on potential contradictions surrounding the idea of English as a "tool." Unfortunately, only Maria and Mina were present for this class, as the other two students were busy with obligations for other classes. As such, the analysis here will focus only on Maria and Mina's viewpoints and discussion. However, this is just one example of the immediate interrogation of a discourse which was constitutive of their master frame, and it should be understood that this is thus representative of a process which was ongoing throughout the study. I have chosen this example, as it is clearly illustrative of both the process of fostering counter-framing, and of clear changes in the attitudes of the participants (although how lasting they were is, of course, another question). The previous lesson in week 5 of the course consisted of a lecture focused on the early development of ELF, and particularly the work of Jenkins (2000) on the phonology of English as an international language. In that lecture, we had discussed Jenkins' arguments about intelligibility, and the suggestion that pronunciation teaching ought not to be based around a set of 'native speaker' norms, but should rather focus more on the features which occur in the Lingua Franca Core (LFC); that is, the pronunciation features which Jenkins suggests contribute most to intelligibility in ELF interactions. In week 6, we looked at some examples of activities designed to introduce LFC concepts and features to students, taken from Kiczkowiak and Lowe (2018). The goal of the class was for the students to understand the activities in terms of their objectives, and then to evaluate the activities based on their relevance to early ELF theory, their applicability in the classroom, and any other criteria they felt were relevant. The following extract from my research journal describes the setup of this part of the class:

> Later in the lesson, I gave the students the choice of ELF1[1]-inspired activities from me and Marek's book, asked them to choose one each,

> read them through, and then explain them to one another and evaluate them. Maria chose one about awareness raising, while Mina focused on pronunciation teaching.
>
> *(Journal extract 26 May 2023)*

Here, the students were given the opportunity to choose activities from the textbook themselves, and were then asked to read the activities, summarize them for each other, and provide some critical evaluation of the material. The activities in the book were divided into two types—those focused on awareness-raising, and those focused on the practical application of these ideas. The awareness-raising activities were those in which the goal was to raise awareness of research and theory surrounding ELF, world Englishes, and other related issues such as native-speakerism. The practical activities were focused on teaching skills related to ELF use in the real world. In this case, the participants chose one activity each from the section of the book devoted to pronunciation and the LFC. Maria chose an activity focused on awareness-raising, and Mina chose one focused on the teaching of practical skills. Their reactions to the activities are recorded in the following journal entry:

> Maria was generally positive about her activity, claiming that it would be useful for students to understand the different varieties of English that they would encounter globally, and thus make them more effective users of the language. Mina was much more ambivalent about both activities. Maria suggested that this kind of pronunciation focus could make people effective users of the language who would be able to communicate with people all over the world, thus granting them greater opportunities for things like travel and business. However, Mina said that if she had learned English through lessons with this kind of awareness raising and pronunciation focus, she would not have been able to pass her entrance exams, which would have shut off opportunities for her further language development, and maybe even her career. This seemed to suggest that while she agreed with many of the ideas in principle, she thought that if they were to be implemented, they would butt up against the system in which the students had to operate.
>
> *(Journal extract 26 May 2023)*

Here, a very clear opportunity to highlight an apparent contradiction emerged. Maria expressed enthusiasm about the activities, suggesting they would help students to understand global English as it is used for international communication, and thereby become more effective communicators. This was in line with the master framing outlined in the previous chapter, in which the participants suggested that English is a "tool" and a common resource that can be used by all speakers to achieve their own ends. However, Mina offered a different perspective that seemed to rub up against the master

framing, revealing a contradiction lurking beneath the surface. While being cautiously positive of ELF ideas in the abstract, Mina raised the possibility that in practice this kind of focus might work against the interests of students. Using her own experiences of taking entrance exams, Mina suggested that focusing on this kind of awareness raising would have taken time away from studying the forms of the language which would have allowed her to pass her university entrance exams, and thus to enter a prestigious university. She also suggested that an approach to pronunciation teaching that focused on intelligibility over features of standard English would have lessened her opportunities for academic study in a system in which standard, inner-circle forms of English are highly prized and can open doors both academically and in the world of work. As Breaden and Goodman (2020) explain, entrance exams in Japanese universities hold closely to standard and even archaic forms of English, influenced both by government-mandated material as taught in high schools and the authority of writers sometimes several centuries removed from the present (p. 116):

> The primary concern of the entrance exam committee, as the chair kept reminding it, was to ensure that the material in the exam was within the approved parameters of the government-regulated high school syllabus. For example, the committee had to constantly refer to the list of English words approved for teaching on the senior high school curriculum. It discovered that neither "suitably" nor "turtle" were included, but that "strychnine" and "turpitude" were. It also discovered that the phrase "that's a shame" could not be used; the approved expression was "that's a pity". Where the syllabus did not provide a decisive answer, the committee spent a long time in speculative discussion over students' relative familiarity with different terms; "mobile" or "cell" phone? Would they know what a "fitness club" was? Much of the discussion around grammar and other linguistic conventions was too esoteric for an average native speaker to join in. It concerned dangling modifiers or collocations or entailed a long discussion over the acceptability of the structure "be not" because John Donne had used it. The ability of the professors on the committee was tested to make fine distinctions between different complex structures, such as "what he said cannot be true" and "he said what cannot be true."

As Mina suggested, it is hard to see how an ELF-aware approach to teaching could easily be reconciled with exams designed in the way described above. Indeed, Igarashi and Igarashi (2022) suggest that one major barrier to ELF implementation is the influence of tests, writing that "washback from standardized tests works against ELF by maintaining standard norms" (p. 15; see also Rose & Galloway, 2019; Rose & Syrbe, 2018). Simpson & O'Regan (2021) note that in such cases as these, language learning takes on a "fetishized form, often in the guise of a credentialed qualification, over which an

individual can then claim a right of ownership, and fetishistically trade in the market as a commodified skill" (p. 10). If the earning of such qualifications is predicated on students' adherence to "standard" forms of English, an approach to teaching that emphasizes flexibility and negotiation around form and meaning could potentially lead to disadvantages when taking such exams. Mina did not suggest that ELF-aware teaching approaches were incompatible with passing entrance exams because they would teach inappropriate models of English. Indeed, ELF-aware teaching does not prescribe models, but rather presents information about the global spread of English and encourages accommodation and adaptability (Galloway, 2017b). Mina did, however, suggest that given the very limited time available to teachers and students to learn sufficient language to pass high stakes, form-focused entrance exams,[2] it is likely that diverting time to the study of sociolinguistic uses of English and skills of accommodation will leave them at a disadvantage.

As well as highlighting a contradiction between the students' master framing, and their existent social reality, this episode also seemed to highlight a contradiction between the idea of English as a tool and another discourse which comprised the master frame—the idea of English learning as a way of developing social status and gaining opportunities for economic or social advancement. Mina was suggesting that English could not simply be learned as a communicative tool, because this would disadvantage students studying for highly competitive entrance exams which require them to have a knowledge of standard, inner-circle forms of English. In this exchange, it was possible to see two discourses from the participants' master frame coming into conflict. There was here a clear disconnect between the idea of learning English as a communicative tool and learning English as a way of increasing a person's social status and human capital. When placed in the context of the expectations and requirements that influence English study, these two notions stood in opposition to one another.

Following this interaction, I encouraged the participants to discuss this contradiction and reconsider their views in light of this clash of perspectives. The result of this can be seen in the following journal extract:

> This led Maria to rethink her point of view, and she suggested that the effectiveness of this kind of activity is constrained by context. In some contexts, it may be useful to know this kind of thing as it may help with intelligibility, while in others it would lead to educational, social, and economic disadvantage not to be able to converse in the prestige form of the language.
>
> *(Journal extract 26 May 2023)*

In this interaction, after some discussion, Maria ended up changing her position somewhat. Both students were positive about the idea of focusing on intelligibility in theory, and suggested that teaching English with this kind of focus would open doors for travel and self-enrichment by allowing people to

communicate with speakers from all over the world. However, Mina was very quick to point out that including this kind of focus actually has the potential to disadvantage students and close off opportunities to them which might be open to those who have focused on mastering more standard forms of English. In response, after some encouragement from the researcher, Maria acknowledged the systemic limitations which may prevent this approach from being successful in practice. While in principle she agreed with an intelligibility-focused approach to teaching, she tempered her enthusiasm after considering the requirements of entrance exams and job applications which may expect or require a mastery of standard forms of English, derived from particular inner-circle countries.

Maria's response here represents what in Chapter 3 I termed "frame modification." Maria did not completely reformulate her worldview, nor did she stay wedded to her initial framing. Rather, she exhibited an awareness that her framing was insufficient to account for the influence of entrance exams and future careers on the possibility of teaching and learning English in a way focused on accommodation, flexibility, and intelligibility. In response to this, she made a modification to her initial framing, which allowed for the influence of contextual factors in deciding what forms of English it may be a good idea for students to focus on learning. This made it possible for her to retain a positive orientation towards ELF-aware teaching, while also acknowledging the difficulties involved in actualizing it in particular contexts. Maria thus modified her initial framing around English as a communication tool to incorporate the social and economic influences that may prevent this from currently being a true possibility. This did not represent a recognition that society would itself have to change in some way, which would have constituted a more robust form of counter-framing, but it did show how the highlighting of a contradiction placed the initial master framing of the students in doubt, and revealed potentially ideological elements within it.

It is important at this point to emphasize that neither participant was endorsing the system that appeared to make more ELF-aware teaching an impracticality. As we have seen in the previous chapter, all of the participants felt very strongly that English was a tool that people could use to achieve their own ends and to express themselves and their identities. They also felt that all varieties of English should be considered of equal worth and treated with equal respect. However, through this interaction, Maria and Mina seemed to become more aware of the limits placed on their ability to actualize this state of affairs. With the pressure to pass entrance exams for prestigious universities, which in turn may lead to more career opportunities and possibilities for social advancement, they came to the conclusion that the teaching of English in an ELF-aware manner faces tremendous challenges. This didn't entail a rejection of ELF as a theoretical perspective, but it highlighted the disconnect between their conception of English as a global language and the reality faced by students studying the language.

It should also be reiterated here that the research process engaged in was focused on contrasting the expressed beliefs and values of the participants with their acknowledged social realities. The goal was not to evaluate or criticize ELF scholarship by showing that it is in some way impracticable. Indeed, ELF researchers are very aware of the limitations that may be faced by teachers and learners in terms of actualizing their beliefs. As Jenkins (2012, p. 492) writes:

> ELF researchers have always been careful to point out that we do not believe it is our place to tell teachers what to do, but that it is for ELT practitioners to decide whether/to what extent ELF is relevant to their learners in their context. ELF researchers have also always argued in favour of learner choice as to which kind of English to aim for (a choice which, it has to be said, often is not available in traditional EFL classrooms). All they ask is that learners are presented with the sociolinguistic facts of the spread of English around the world before they make their choice.

Similarly, Galloway (2017b), when describing a GELT (Global Englishes Language Teaching) module on an MA programme, emphasizes that the goal of the course was not to provide prescriptions about how teachers should use the ideas presented, but rather to provide them with information that could allow a more rational approach to deciding what forms to teach in class. What was at issue here was not ELF as represented in the research literature, but rather the disconnect between the students' positive orientation towards ELF-aware teaching, and the way this may be negated in practice by their claim that for most people English learning functions as an investment in human capital.

The contradiction between the points of view expressed by Maria and Mina here was very striking, and was certainly not something that the researcher needed to unearth from subtle hints made by the participants. This was not a case of the researcher heroically sweeping in to enlighten the participants about their false ideas or beliefs. Rather, this was a case in which contradictions emerged naturally between the views of the participants, and the researcher simply flagged the contradiction and encouraged further discussion to tease out any of its potential implications. Without the researcher's presence, this interaction may still have occurred, spurring reconsideration and shifts in thought similar or identical to those described earlier. However, the researcher did play the important role of encouraging further consideration of this issue, and of facilitating direct discussion between the participants about the evident contradiction exhibited between their expressed ideals and their described social reality. In this case, the contradiction revolved around the popular view, held by the participants, that English is a common resource (a "tool") that can be used by all speakers to express themselves and achieve their own ends. As Mina pointed out, this view stands in tension with the fact

that students exist within a system in which certain forms of English are privileged, and access to these forms of English confers linguistic and symbolic capital. This seemed to hint at an ideological character to this aspect of the master frame.

Further, this interaction also suggested that two elements of their master frame were in tension with one another. The participants had suggested that English is (1) a tool that (2) can lead to social and economic advancement. However, as Mina pointed out, the teaching and learning of English as a communication tool could actually serve to inhibit social and economic advancement, as it may detract from the learning of standard or prestige forms of the language that are necessary for university entrance exams and career advancement. This encounter suggested that the master frame expressed by the participants at the start of the course contained elements that were unstable and contradictory. The complex ways in which these elements interacted also did not allow for an easy resolution through simply changing one or more belief. Rather they pointed to the need both to alter the social conditions in which language learning is carried out and to transcend the internally contradictory belief system held by the participants in order to realize the values to which they aspired. While the students did not reach this conclusion in this specific case, it was a dormant possibility that was returned to again later in the course, as will be shown in the next two examples.

This particular interaction did not lead to any suggestions for, or discussion about, how the values that comprised the students' master frame could be made realizable, but it stands as one example of how a contradiction became evident between the students' expressed values and their recognition of their social reality and was immediately dealt with. There were several of these moments throughout the study, in which opportunities to immediately highlight contradictions emerged. The cumulative effect of these instances may have influenced the subtle counter-framing which we will turn to in the next chapter. This, however, is a good example of how the immediate approaches to fostering counter-framing could be implemented in practice during a research project.

Example 2: English as a common resource vs. the property of 'native speakers'

A second example of an incident in which there was an opportunity to immediately question and interrogate the framing of the students emerged in week 10 of the course. This incident focused on the apparent contradiction between the ideas of English as a common resource vs. the idea of English as the property of 'native speakers' from the inner circle. It should be noted here that the way in which the term "property" was used was rather vague and underdeveloped, and emerged from my research notes (as hinted at in Chapter 4). During our discussions the students and I used the term

"property" to mean something like an object over which a group of people have an ownership claim. As noted below, the exact nature of this ownership claim was shifting and occasionally unclear, appearing at times to indicate an object which could be acquired, and at other times to indicate an inherent characteristic of speakers (see Simpson & O'Regan, 2021). Unfortunately, this led to some confusion in our discussions, which perhaps could have been avoided if I had introduced a more suitable collection of terms at the outset. Nevertheless, I think we were able to come to a shared understanding of the central concepts under dispute, and develop some rough working labels with which to discuss them. The terms "public property" and "private property" were terms I initially adopted when writing my notes, and which eventually made their way into our classroom discussions. The former referred to the idea of language as a common resource, while the latter referred to the idea of language as exclusively belonging to an individual or collective of speakers.

In this lesson, we were discussing the topic of intercultural communication, and how this could be integrated into classroom activities. At the start of the class, we discussed some historical and influential perspectives on intercultural communication, particularly focusing on the work of Edward T. Hall (see Hall, 1989; Moon, 1996) and Geert Hofstede (2001), as well as some criticisms of these (Holliday, 2010; Jackson, 2011). We also looked at key concepts in intercultural communication studies such as "critical intercultural awareness," or the ability to decentre one's own cultural perspectives and assumptions when considering other cultures (Byram, 1997). The goal of this class was to introduce some key perspectives on intercultural communication, consider their strengths and weaknesses, and gather some concepts that could be used to discuss examples of intercultural communication activities which we would examine in the next lesson of the course.

What appeared significant to me in these discussions was the assumption on the part of the participants that languages were tied to particular cultures, and that this was true in the case of English no less than their own first languages. For example, the students often made mention of the intercultural difficulties that might arise when communicating with 'native speakers' of English (always assumed to be from inner-circle countries), and discussed ways in which these might be overcome by learners of the language. This seemed to me to sit at odds with their contention, discernable in their master framing, that English is a common resource that can be appropriated by individuals and collectives for their own purposes. Recall that in their master framing (see Chapter 4), the students had spoken positively about how English "morphs itself into what its speakers want it to be" and explained that "how a language is spoken, how it sounds, the meaning certain words can and cannot convey, all of this changes with the times and the people, and it constitutes the beauty and the essence of the language itself." These quotes from Chiara highlight a broader sentiment among the participants that while

language is deeply connected to culture, it need not be permanently tied to one culture and can be adopted by individuals and communities for new purposes of cultural expression. They appeared to suggest that this was particularly true for English, in its function as a global language. However, if they believed that English is a common resource, and one that can be legitimately adopted by both individuals and communities for their own purposes of expression, how could the participants so casually associate English with particular inner-circle cultures, and thus interpret intercultural communication through English as a process of communicating with members of those cultures? This appeared to me to suggest a contradiction in thought. On the one hand, the participants suggested that English is a common resource, available to all for purposes of self-expression. On the other, they seemed to suggest English is a language properly owned by 'native speakers' from inner-circle countries, to whose cultural norms it was inextricably bound. In other words, the participants seemed to vacillate between the idea of English as the property of a speaker in a "legal sense," that is, as an object "which a speaker comes to possess in the same manner as they might own real estate property, commodities, or money" (Simpson & O'Regan, 2021, p. 12), and English as the property of a speaker in terms of being a "trait of the speaker in-themselves—i.e. *as a part of their nature*" (Simpson & O'Regan, 2021, p. 12). These two views appeared to sit in tension with one another, and I felt that it would therefore be productive to raise this seeming contradiction with the participants directly during the lesson.

At around the midpoint of the lesson, I brought up some of the statements the students had made earlier in the class, as recorded in my notes. I then contrasted these with statements they had made in their interviews and in previous lessons. I recall their responses in the following journal extract:

> The responses were quite varied. They initially noticed and agreed that there was a contradiction present between the two notions of property.[3] At first, they clearly said there was a contradiction between English as a "tool" that can be used by anyone to express themselves, and English as the property of particular Western nations and the populations thereof.
>
> *(Journal extract 23 June 2023)*

Initially, the response from the participants was quite encouraging. They immediately acknowledged the contradiction, and seemed to agree that there was some level of incommensurability between the views they had previously expressed, and those they were putting forward in this lesson. However, this initial reaction was somewhat short-lived, and as the discussion continued, the participants began to move back towards their initial stances:

> They later walked this back, with Chiara and Maria both suggesting different ways in which this was not a contradiction. First, Chiara suggested

> that language such as heritage languages were private property, whereas a national language is public property. She also suggested that in Italy, there are various dialects which people might not consider Italian, and that these should be preserved. In sum, she suggested that language can be either public or private, depending on the scale at which the language functions (…) Maria talked about things like "private languages" created between two or more people, and suggested these could be private property, and Chiara mentioned that she does small personal drawings that she would not hang in an art gallery, but that she still thinks have value. These are things she does for herself and not for others. They suggested that in cases like these, the language would be private property, but would still be valuable for a person.
>
> *(Journal extract 23 June 2023)*

In this extract it is possible to see an example of what in Chapter 3 I termed "frame sheltering." This is a situation in which the participants acknowledge the contradiction raised and are even happy to explore "bailey" of the potential contradiction to some limited extent. However, when pushed too far, or when they feel they have moved out of some kind of comfort zone, they will retreat into the "motte" of their original framing, which they will then attempt to defend with a variety of arguments. In this case, while the participants first agreed with the apparent contradiction between the notions of English as a common resource and English as the property of a particular community of speakers, they soon began to suggest ways in which the seeming contradiction was actually a question of context. In order to make this argument, Chiara began to talk about heritage languages, which may be considered the property of a small, and perhaps marginalized population. Maria took this train of thought to an even more remote destination, suggesting that things such as private languages (such as may be created between identical twins or criminal conspirators) could be considered the property of a group.

These were very interesting points, and were certainly ingenious ways of reconciling the seeming disconnect between the notions of language as a common resource vs. language as the property of a group. However, it seemed to me that these arguments did not address the specific case that we were discussing, which concerned their stated beliefs around English as an international language, and the contradictions these seemed to contain. By changing the context of the language being discussed, we somewhat lost sight of the question of English as a common resource vs. English as the property of 'native speakers' from the inner circle, and instead moved into tangential discussions about what constitutes something being "private," and whether an individual could "own" a language they themselves had created. While it is very interesting to consider whether a constructed or minority language can be the property of a specific group, this does not address the fundamental contradiction in the two views that the participants themselves had presented,

which focused specifically on English as an international language, and its role as either a common resource available to all, or as the property of 'native speakers' from the inner circle. I attempted to raise these objections in the lesson itself, as can be seen in the following journal entries:

> This [the question of heritage languages] was an interesting point, but I felt it seemed to ignore the fact that English is used on a global scale, while heritage languages are much more locally specific.
>
> *(Journal extract 23 June 2023)*

> I suggested that this [the idea of private languages] might be disanalogous, because those things are private and not shared with others, whereas before in previous lessons they had suggested that English is a tool that could be used by people for career advancement and international communication. Obviously, in this case the language would not be private.
>
> *(Journal extract 23 June 2023)*

My attempts to spur further rethinking did not move much beyond this. While the participants had initially acknowledged the contradiction, they quickly moved back to their initial framing, and deployed a series of arguments in defense of this framing. While I attempted to question what I considered to be disanalogous elements in their reformulated ideas which reduced their relevance to the question at hand, the discussion did not move beyond here. As I recorded in my journal, this "left us at something of an impasse." This was probably not helped by the confusion over the concept of "property," for which I bear some responsibility.

While Chiara and Maria worked hard to defend their original position, the other students took a somewhat less involved stance, and attempted to avoid the discussion of the issue altogether.

> Riko much more readily suggested that there is a contradiction between the public and private ideas, but did not do much with this recognition beyond acknowledge it. She did not attempt to reconcile the ideas, but rather withdrew from the discussion.
>
> *(Journal extract 23 June 2023)*

This appears to be an example of what I termed in Chapter 3 "frame maintenance." Riko acknowledged the contradiction, but did not attempt to deal with it in any obvious or decisive way. Rather than making an effort to address the contradiction, she simply removed herself from the discussion and avoided the implications of the contradiction for her beliefs. This did not mean no change was taking place, but whatever considerations may have been ongoing within Riko's mind were not observable or recordable, at least, not at the time of the discussion.

This fostering session triggered an interesting discussion, but the students seemed reluctant to be drawn on the question I was trying to get at, preferring instead to find ways to maintain their frame despite at first recognizing the contradiction. Their primary response was to try to reconcile the two perspectives, through bringing up examples that they felt showed that language could be a common resource, while at the same time remaining the property of specific individuals or groups. They seemed keen to find ways in which these two perspectives could be reconciled, and in pursuit of this, they tried to focus attention on cases of heritage languages, private languages and even small personal examples involving art. While these were interesting and thought-provoking, they moved the discussion gradually away from the idea they had initially expressed of English as an international communication tool, and its negation in the idea of English as being intimately and inextricably linked to the cultures and speakers of inner-circle nations.

This was a somewhat frustrating incident as the responses of the participants did not indicate much willingness to change. Nevertheless, this example is an instructive one, because it shows the ways that participants may react to attempts to foster counter-framing. Indeed, this highlights cases of both frame sheltering and frame maintenance, demonstrating that the reactions of participants cannot always be predicted, and may be surprising or even disheartening, especially if the researcher has anticipated more dramatic reactions. Nevertheless, the task of the researcher is to engage professionally, honestly and respectfully, acknowledging the views of participants while at the same time attempting to push beyond them where possible or necessary.

On a related note, this example is valuable for showing some of the messiness involved in conducting a study using frame analysis. It is not a simple or straightforward process, and may involve quick and sudden changes in views, regressions to previous views, defensiveness, and even (occasionally) hostility. In the example presented above we did not see a linear movement from one view to another. Instead we saw a complex and involved process of challenging and negotiating ideas, which exhibited concessions, retreats, pivots, and withdrawals. The discussion ended on a note that was not fully satisfactory to anyone. And yet, it was not unproductive.

There are several points to be made about this. Firstly, it highlights the importance of the researcher clearly setting out the terms of the discussion and avoiding the use of slippery and ill-defined terminology. A lack of terminological clarity may lead to incompatible interpretations and drag the participants into conversational digressions, tangents, and cul-de-sacs. Here, the use of the term "property" clearly led to situations in which we were talking past each other and possibly misunderstanding each other's points. This discussion highlights the danger of such imprecision. Secondly, it should be said that the participants engaged thoughtfully and respectfully in the midst of what could have been taken as a somewhat face-threatening situation. Their ability to devise ingenious responses to the challenges raised is to their credit, and I was very impressed both by their creative grappling with the subject and by their inventive solutions to the

problems presented. While this energy was aimed at shoring up their framing rather than altering it, this was nevertheless an involved and interesting process. Finally, as I stressed in Chapter 3, the process of frame analysis is an ongoing, iterative one. The goal is to raise awareness of contradictions and thus spur rethinking among participants. It is entirely possible that this incident planted seeds that bore fruit later in the study, at some point after the study, or that may do so even at some point in the future. The researcher should pursue discussion, not conversion. The goal is not to achieve some kind of "Road to Damascus" moment, in which the blinding light of the researcher's insights converts the participants to their point of view. Rather, it is to attempt to highlight contradictions, and induce contemplation of possible ways in which these can be resolved. While I have suggested that in this interaction I did not find the participants' responses convincing, that does not mean that I consider my own perspective infallible. Indeed, as we shall see later in this chapter, there were occasions on which discussion with the participants caused me to reconsider my own views.

In the previous sections, I have highlighted instances of immediate approaches to the fostering of counter-framing, in which contradictions became apparent during the course of the research, and the researcher chose to address them in the moment. This is not, however, the only way in which a researcher may choose to highlight and address potential contradictions.

Delayed approaches to addressing contradictions

The previous section contained two examples of contradictions that became evident in the moment and were addressed spontaneously and immediately by the researcher. However, this is not the only way of addressing contradictions, nor is it necessarily the best way. In this study, alongside these more immediate approaches I also employed a delayed approach to addressing contradictions. A delayed approach is one in which the contradiction is addressed by the researcher at some time removed from its original appearance. In this case, as tensions between the master framing of the students and their tacit recognition of their social reality began to mount, I devised ways of raising these issues directly. These interventions occurred more regularly as the course progressed. This was because planning such interventions required sufficient time to collect data, begin coding the data, take notice of apparent contradictions, and plan strategies for raising these with the students.

For this project, I decided to take a somewhat blunt and direct approach in addressing contradictions that appeared to arise in the class. While coding the data, I took note of potential contradictions, and before subsequent classes I simply made slides which outlined the two (or more) seemingly contradictory elements in what the participants had said previously. See the example in Figure 5.1 for an idea of how these looked.

These slides were included as part of the regular lecture slides of the lesson. On some occasions, I would begin the lesson by using one of these slides to

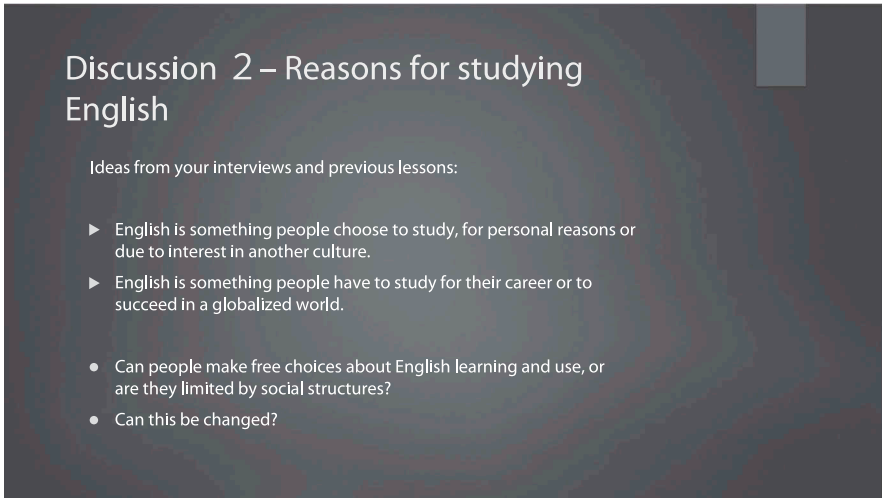

FIGURE 5.1. Example of classroom slide

start a discussion, while at other times I would place them in the middle or at the end of the class. The choice of when to raise these issues related to how well I felt they fit with the flow of the lesson, whether they appeared to connect to one of the points made in an adjacent slide, and whether I felt they would spark a discussion that would lead into or distract from the content of the lecture that comprised that week's lesson. There is no correct or incorrect decision about when to raise these issues, and the researcher must use their discretion to decide when it would be most appropriate and constructive to bring these topics up. This decision must also be based on the context in which the researcher is working, and the needs of the research participants. The researcher should be careful not to subordinate the needs of their participants to their own interests as a researcher. In this study, the decision of how and when to raise the potential contradictions was made based on the context of the class and the surrounding material.

When the time came to initiate the planned intervention, I would first introduce the slide by referring to the study the students had agreed to take part in. This became something of a class ritual. After turning to the slide, I would go through the claims made by the students. In most cases these were my own summaries or paraphrases of what students had said, rather than direct quotes. This was to clarify quickly the expressed beliefs. After reciting each claim, I would ask the student if they had any memory of making this claim. In cases where they did not, I would have some prepared notes ready to show what I was referring to, giving them the opportunity either to affirm my interpretation of their words or to dispute or clarify the meaning. Once we had agreed on the set of claims, I would point towards the set of discussion questions at the bottom of the

slide, and ask the participants to discuss these together. During their discussions, I would monitor and take notes, occasionally interjecting with questions or prompts. This eventually moved from a discussion between the students only into more of a whole-class discussion in which I was also involved.

My goal in these discussions was to prompt consideration of the potential contradictions between the participants' master framing and other statements they made which appeared to tacitly acknowledge the reality of the world which stood in contradiction with this frame. I was, of course, an active participant in these discussions, and it would be no use to claim I was an uninvolved, objective observer. Nevertheless, I attempted to approach these discussions with an open mind and a curious attitude, in order both to encourage the participants to reconsider their beliefs and to see if my own beliefs might need to be reconsidered in turn. In the examples below, I provide a case in which the delayed approach to raising contradictions was trialled, and outline the responses of the students to this attempt.

Example 3: The equality of Englishes

The example presented here is taken from the eleventh week of the course, in which, unfortunately, once again only two students (Maria and Chiara) were present. This was a lesson in which the students were to be presenting, discussing, and evaluating their own intercultural communication-focused activities, which they had designed and prepared based on the lecture given the previous week. So as not to distract from the discussion of the activities the students had worked hard to develop, I decided to save the discussion of contradictions for the end of the class. The students each shared their activities, completed feedback forms about each other's activities, and had lengthy discussions about the positive points they perceived in each other's work, as well as making suggestions for potential improvements or changes to the activities (see Appendix E for the feedback form).

Once the discussions between the students had concluded and they had finished giving feedback on each other's activities, the slide in Figure 5.2 was put up on the screen by the teacher. Through this slide, I wished to highlight the apparent inconsistencies between the participants' claim that all Englishes are equal and the implied suggestion they later made that some Englishes are more valuable than others owing to their utility in securing job opportunities and other forms of social advancement.

As noted earlier, I first explained that I wanted to discuss some issues and tensions that I felt had arisen between some of the statements made by the participants earlier in the course, and other statements made at different times. I then drew the participants' attention to the slide, and read through the three summaries of their positions displayed in Figure 5.2, asking after

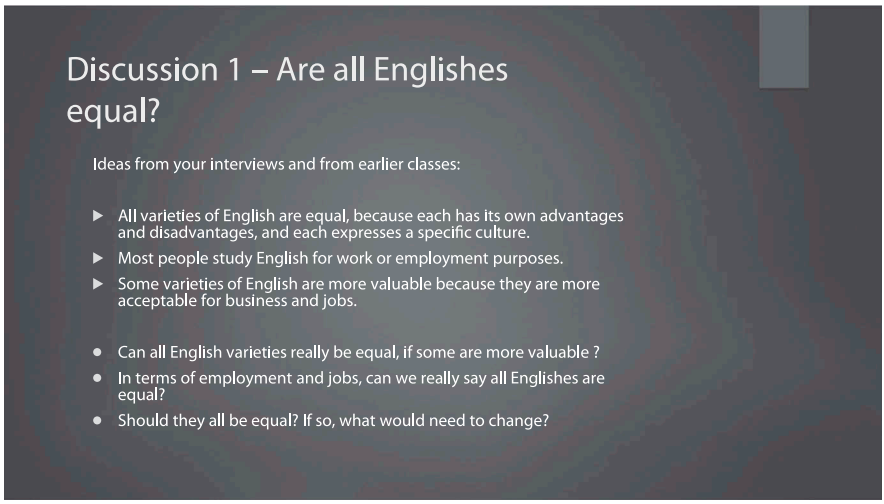

FIGURE 5.2 Classroom slide from Example 3

each if the students remembered making the claim, and if the summary was representative of their beliefs. Once these points had been confirmed, I asked them to look at the three discussion questions at the bottom of the slide, and to discuss these questions together. The discussion which then took place is recorded in the following entry from my journal:

> Both students were extremely engaged with this topic, and spoke about it extensively. At first, Maria suggested that all varieties of English could be considered equal, because they could incorporate the jargon and vocabulary used in business into their corpus, so all Englishes are equally valuable because they are all capable of being used for work. Chiara strongly pushed back against this idea, stating that she had had the experience of speaking to African Americans, and they had told her about their experiences of using English in the workplace. She said they had told her that they had to make conscious effort to speak in more "workplace-friendly" language than they would at home, because their natural speaking styles, which they use in their communities, would be considered unacceptable in the workplace. I suggested that this might be a question of "linguistic racism", and asked if it was only race on which this kind of discrimination was based. Chiara said that this was not the case, as she knew experiences of people attempting to "drop" their regional accents in Italy, which are considered "unintelligible" and unsuitable for work.
>
> *(Journal extract 30 June 2023)*

In this extract it is clear that the students had complex and sophisticated views about the topic in question. Maria first attempted to reconcile the points being made by suggesting that all varieties of English are equal owing to the fact that each can incorporate business-related language and terminology, thus allowing users of those varieties to engage fruitfully with others in the workplace. Maria here attempted a form of frame modification in which all Englishes could be made equal through their adaptation to the workplace. In other words, she argued that in workplace settings, the variety of the language used is less important than the ability of speakers of that variety to adapt their language use to the requirements of the workplace. This is not an unreasonable point, and indeed research in business English as a lingua franca (BELF) has recorded how the success of BELF speakers in their field is predicated less on the specific form of the language they speak and more on their insider knowledge of business and their mastery of the jargon used by their colleagues (Fanha Martins, 2017), as well as the employment of communication strategies to facilitate effective communication across linguistic borders (Tsuchiya, 2020). This seemed to me a strong attempt to maintain her initial framing while acknowledging the contradiction, and there is indeed evidence that in many multinational business contexts, forms of ELF and translanguaging are used to facilitate discussion and to mediate between parties with different linguacultural backgrounds (Takino, 2020; Tsuchiya, 2020).

However, Chiara parried this assertion with the claim that certain communities in particular cultural contexts are compelled to consciously adapt their language in the workplace away from their natural speaking styles. The two examples she raised were African Americans with whom she had spoken and speakers of regional accents in Italy, claiming that in both cases she had heard of these speakers feeling it necessary to disguise or alter their speaking style into one considered more suitable for a particular workplace. This is a claim that is borne out by research, with studies showing that accents and dialects can have a negative impact on whether people are perceived as professional or not in the workplace (Byrd, 2024; McCluney, et al., 2021). Further support for this assertion can be found in the work of Ramjattan (2019; 2022) into "accent reduction" programmes in the Global North which are advertised to migrants with the claim that certain accents are more suitable for the workplace than others. Chiara thus drew from two distinct linguistic examples to illustrate her claim that it is unlikely that all varieties of English will be made acceptable for the workplace simply by the use of specific business-related jargon and terminology by speakers. Maria considered this position and, after further discussion, agreed with Chiara's claim that some varieties of English will be valued over others in some workplaces owing to underlying prejudices or perceptions about what constitutes "professional" language use. This in turn may be connected to prejudices around race, class, nationality, and geographical background, which, as research on native-speakerism has shown, are often points which are conflated (Ali 2009; Amin

1997; 1999; Bonfiglio 2010; Kubota and Fujimoto 2013; Kubota and Lin 2006; Leung et al. 1997; Rivers and Ross 2013). While it is true that businesspeople may fruitfully use ELF and translanguaging strategies to facilitate communication in international settings, there are still issues of prejudice and discrimination related to language in numerous workplaces (see for example Śliwa & Johansson, 2014), especially those in monolingual cultural contexts (Ramjattan, 2019; 2022).

The discussion at this point turned to the question of what this implied, and what might need to be done to change this situation. It was here that the most obvious instance of *counter-framing* occurred. In the following journal extract I record the rather dramatic statements made by the participants:

> Both Maria and Chiara strongly suggested that all Englishes ought to be equal, and that in order to accomplish this, we would have to change society. Maria concurred, saying "it's not that we have to change the varieties of English, we have to change society." However, they remarked that this was "easy to say, difficult to do." When I asked how this could be done, Chiara suggested that it was a case of changing ideas through educating more people about the value of other languages, and that those people, in turn, could become "teachers" of others.
>
> *(Journal extract 30 June 2023)*

In this extract, the students provided an entirely new framing. Initially, their master frame had contained the claims that all Englishes are equal, and that English was studied primarily for the purposes of increasing job opportunities and levels of employability. However, after discussing and becoming increasingly conscious of the inherent contradictions between these ideas, they produced a new understanding in which the formerly stable picture of English learning and equality of Englishes was replaced by a need for a social change that would make the equality of Englishes an actuality. As Maria suggested, the values of the participants around the equality of Englishes did not change. They still held the idea that all varieties of English are equal (as a value claim) and should be equal (as a social reality). However, the fact that some Englishes are valued over others, and that this is particularly true in the world of work, which they had suggested was the prime reason for learning English, mean that these values cannot be realized in the current social order. Their newly expressed counter frame suggested that all Englishes should be equal, and that this could only come about through social change. Initially, this was an abstract suggestion, with the participants claiming it was "easy to say, difficult to do"; however this soon turned into concrete suggestions for action that could be taken in order to actualize their professed values. These actions focused on education around world Englishes, which would then spread to increasingly large groups of people in a ripple effect as they shared their ideas with others.

Readers may find these suggestions to be underwhelming. After all, the participants did not call for an overthrow of neoliberal global capitalism, nor did they suggest ways in which a social revolution could be incited. They did, however, suggest ways in which changes could be made to society that would allow for their values to be realized, and these suggestions were sensible, pragmatic, and realistic. What is important here is not whether a specific outcome was or was not reached (which would make the mistake of imposing a desired outcome onto the research process in advance, a decidedly non-critical approach to either research or education), but rather that ideological elements of the master frame were recognized and a counter-frame was produced that acknowledged these contradictory elements and suggested ways in which action could be taken to align reality with its false appearance.

This idea was reiterated as the discussion continued. The class was about ELF and was focused on a book I myself had coauthored suggesting ways to teach ELF and incorporate ELF awareness into the classroom (Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2018). Based on our discussion about current prejudices against non-standard Englishes, I decided to raise some critical questions about the ELF-aware teaching suggestions outlined in the book. The resulting discussion is recorded in the journal extract below:

> I asked them to consider the topic of ELF in light of the economic necessities we have been discussing, and shared some of my own doubts that ELF could be an effective way of teaching. If the structure doesn't change, is teaching more ELF-aware approaches simply guaranteeing that people won't fit into the structure, and thus disadvantaging them? Maria and Chiara both said they didn't feel this was that case, and that we would have to change the structure through education and raising awareness of world Englishes and ELF. As Chiara stated, "the problem is not that World Englishes and ELF are bad, it's that not enough people know about them." Maria suggested that in high school they are still "stuck with American and British English," and that in her first year of high school the teachers introduced American English for the first time, as if it were some kind of incredible innovation. She suggested that she has had the opportunity to learn about different Englishes, but if people stop in high school, their knowledge of English will stop there too, and they will not have a positive image of other varieties.
>
> *(Journal extract 30 June 2023)*

The first key point to note in this extract is the lack of confidence expressed by the researcher. After looking at the material in this chapter so far, the objection may be raised that the examples given seem both to be directed by the researcher and to reflect the researcher's own principles. In other words, it may seem that the researcher is simply negotiating with the students over certain discourses, with the hope of perhaps seeing their own views reflected

in the student's counter-framing. Despite all the earlier rhetoric of the frame analysis method being aligned with democratic principles and focused on a collaborative process of discussion and critique, this has not been clearly illustrated in the examples provided so far. As such, it is important to note how, at the start of this extract, it appears that my own thinking had begun to be impacted by the discussions with the participants. At this point in the course, I was starting to question my own beliefs with regard to ELF. After engaging in discussions with the students over a period of several weeks, I had started to question whether my ideals around English as an international language were realistic. I have long been of the belief that English is something that should be owned by everyone, and which every user should therefore be entitled to change and adapt for their own purposes, particularly in relation to their national, cultural, or other forms of identity. However, during the discussion with the students I had started to question this as a possibility, and to wonder whether Quirk (1989) had been right to say that "It is neither liberal nor liberating to permit learners to settle for lower standards than the best, and it is a travesty of liberalism to tolerate low standards which will lock the least fortunate into the least rewarding careers" (pp. 22–23). It was the students themselves who pushed back against this creeping conservatism, and suggested a more proactive way of thinking.

This is only a small moment, but it is an example of how the researcher is actively involved in negotiating ideas with the participants and may be spurred to rethink their own ideas and biases through the frame analysis process. Rather than assuming that their position is correct, and guiding the participants towards this position, the researcher should be actively involved in questioning their own framing and values, as well as those of the participants. In this case, the realities described by the participants had led me to rethink my ideas around ELF, and it was through further interaction with the participants, as described in this extract, that I was able to reconcile my values and see a path forward. As I did not analyse my own framing going into this project (something which would be quite difficult to do, although not necessarily impossible), and as I was not systematically recording my own responses (although this is something I might recommend researchers do in the future), I would hesitate to classify my own reaction here using ideas such as frame maintenance, frame sheltering, etc. However, it is clear that my own ideas were being affected by the process, and this illustrated, at least in a small way, the collaborative nature of the frame analysis approach.

A second related point that is highlighted in this extract is what appeared to be another strong example of counter-framing on the part of the participants. The participants appeared to believe that all varieties of English are equal and of equal value, a liberal view of linguistic diversity and pluralism (Heywood, 2003) in line with increasingly popular ideas in ELT. However, they also seemed to become aware (or at least more conscious of) the social constraints on language use that may prevent this equality from being realized in practice.

This allowed them to transcend their views by complicating the initial framing, and also to suggest concrete ways in which the current social order might also be transcended. In this case, Maria suggested that change could be made through awareness-raising in educational contexts, and that more could be done to provide students with knowledge and understanding around world Englishes. This echoes calls from those writing on ELF, World Englishes, and Global Englishes Language Teaching (Rose & Galloway, 2019), that teachers include more awareness-raising activities in class. For example, Galloway & Rose (2014; 2018) have suggested methods of including different English varieties in lessons, and practical suggestions for ELF-aware teaching have also been made by writers such as Kohn (2015; 2022), Kiczkowiak and Lowe (2018), Lowe & Kiczkowiak (2021), and others (e.g., Lopriore & Vettorel, 2016; Sert & Özkan, 2020). It also chimes with researchers who have suggested there be a greater focus on ELF-awareness in textbooks and teaching materials (Galloway, 2017a; Kiczkowiak, 2019; 2021; Vettorell, 2018).

Once again, this suggestion does not provide a path towards systemic change. Rather it is a suggestion for changing minds with the hope that this will gradually lead to the kinds of progressive changes the students would like to see over time. It may also be a little unfair to expect the participants to come up with such suggestions when even those who have been involved in critical ELT research for decades have been unable to provide many suggestions that go far beyond what the participants suggested here. Regardless, while this may fall short of suggestions for revolutionary action, it does indicate that the highlighting of contradictions between the participants' master frame and their tacit understanding of the limitations that prevent this frame from being actualized can lead to concrete suggestions for social change. These can then be recorded by the researcher in any instances of counter-framing that emerge, as demonstrated in the examples provided in this chapter. This thus demonstrates the ways in which the frame analysis method may contribute, at least potentially, to progressive change in ELT.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to illustrate how the researcher attempted to foster and encourage counter-framing on the part of the participants. Examples have been discussed of how the researcher attempted to highlight apparent contradictions between the participants' master framing and their tacit recognition of their social reality. In doing so, it was hoped that these tensions and contradictions could be brought to a level of consciousness, be recognized, and possibly be acted upon. The examples given in this chapter are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they cover the full range of complexity that occurred in the full 15 weeks of the course. Rather, they have been selected for their illustrative qualities. In each case, they show both how the frame analysis method was employed and how the participants responded to the attempts

of the researcher to highlight contradictions. The first two focused on immediate approaches to fostering counter-framing, in which contradictions were pointed out by the researcher and addressed in real time as they arose. The third example focused on a delayed approach to fostering counter-framing, in which contradictions arose gradually over the course of the study and were collected and addressed in a subsequent session. Both of these approaches can be fruitful, as illustrated by the examples given here, although the effects of this fostering may not always be as hoped for by the researcher. Indeed, the second example also helpfully highlighted some of the dangers in approaching these kinds of discussions with a lack of precision and care.

In these examples, several responses were observed from the participants. In some cases, they acknowledged the contradiction that was presented, but did not exhibit any change in view, a process I termed "frame maintenance." In other cases, they engaged in the slightly more promising action of "frame sheltering." In these cases, they explored the contradiction, but retreated to their initial frame when challenged or pushed further than they appeared comfortable with. More promising for the purposes of this book were the responses of "frame modification" and "counter-framing." The first of these was evident when one of the participants acknowledged a contradiction and modified their initial framing to account for it. While this did not result in an abandonment of the frame entirely, it did show that they had noticed an issue with their framing, and made adjustments to accommodate this apparent contradiction. While this could be considered a very small step (or even a step backwards, given the extra layer of protection they had now added to their frame), it did highlight how raising these points led to the participant becoming consciously aware of their framing, and perhaps alert to potential issues within it. This may, in time, lead to further questioning and a change of attitudes. The most extreme response of "counter-framing" occurred when the participants appeared to realize that their initial frame was untenable, and they produced a counter-frame in response. The counter-frame represents an observable shift in ideology, as it indicates that the participants became aware of the contradiction between their dominant values and the social reality in which they lived. While their master frame presented a set of beliefs and understandings about language and language learning that appeared to be coherent, integrated, and harmonious, their counter-framings instead exhibited an understanding that there were serious disconnects between their values and their social reality. They appeared to realize that the conceptual principles that informed their master frame, when taken to their logical conclusions, might be self-negating in practice. Most importantly, they seemed to accept, to some extent, that it would be necessary to change society in order to recognize their values. Their counter-framing thus represented ideological ruptures, and the beginnings of processes through which their understandings could be reformulated in order to transcend the current social reality and the beliefs and values which reproduce it.

These examples have provided some evidence of the effectiveness of the frame analysis approach for spurring the reconsideration of ideas, and fostering counter-framing. By highlighting the apparent gulf between the values and beliefs expressed by the participants, and the material reality they acknowledge to exist, it is possible to bring to a conscious level these contradictions and thus encourage the participants to consider ways in which both their initial framing, and the social world in which they live, might be transcended. The responses of participants to these attempts may not be fully satisfactory to researchers. They may ignore the presented contradictions, use them to shore up their existing frame, or even disagree with researchers that a contradiction exists at all. After all, humans are not machines that reliably produce social change when supplied with contradictions. They will probably have intelligent and nuanced responses to the things the researcher is saying, and part of the researcher's job is to accept these respectfully and take them seriously. Indeed, it is wise for the researcher to consider during this process that they could themselves be wrong about something. After all, if the participants have unexamined assumptions, it would be surprising if the researcher did not hold to some similarly unexamined positions themselves. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to be responsive to this, a process I attempted to highlight in example 3, in which, following discussions with the participants, I expressed my doubts about the possibility of ELF as a practical reality. While I did not undergo a fundamental change in perspective here, I did enter into negotiations with the participants around my beliefs, and was eventually pulled back by the strong counter-framing they suggested.

It should be noted that the study from which these examples were taken placed the researcher in a uniquely advantageous position. Playing the role of the teacher of the class being studied, the researcher had the freedom to set up activities focused specifically on the topics felt to be important. In addition, by assuming the authoritative role of the teacher, the participants were obliged to take the ideas seriously, and perhaps even to give them more weight than they would have if this authority was not present owing to the teacher–student relationship. In other qualitative research projects, the researcher may have to use more creative ways to encourage these kinds of discussions. As previously suggested, this could be done through focus-group interviews, or through the researcher entering the field as a participant observer. It must be acknowledged that successfully engaging in a frame analysis of the type presented in this chapter will require a considerable amount of skill on the part of the researcher, and will entail forward planning so as to avoid possible negative responses from participants, such as ignoring the presented contradictions, or even taking offense to them being raised. Researchers must be careful to anticipate and plan for these possibilities.

The goal of this chapter was to provide an example of how the fostering of counter-framing might look in practice. Several examples have been presented to illustrate the range of responses from participants, both more and less encouraging, and to demonstrate the complexity involved in the process. As

with all qualitative work, it can be messy and interpretive, and yet can also produce insights and instances of change and development that help us to both understand the social world, and to influence it. By fostering counter-framing the researcher encourages the participants to examine their taken-for-granted beliefs and values, and consider how these may clash with other beliefs they hold, or with the social reality in which they live. In so doing, it is possible the participants will produce counter-framings that provide evidence of an ideological rupture and potential paths towards social change. Even if such a dramatic change is not witnessed, seeds may have been planted which will later bear fruit.

Notes

1 "ELF1" is how Jenkins (2015) refers to the first stage of ELF research, which was influenced by world Englishes scholarship, and which attempted to identify the elements of international English use that are most conducive to intelligibility.
2 A fact that has spawned an enormous extracurricular cram school (*juku*) industry which has essentially hybridized with regular schooling for the purposes of exam preparation (see Allen, 2016; Lowe & Mizukura, 2021; Mawer, 2015; Yamato & Zhang, 2017).
3 I.e., between what we called "public" and "private" property.

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6

TRACKING THE POST-INTERVENTION EVOLUTION OF FRAMING

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I described the master frame expressed by the participants in the study and explored some of the ways in which this framing appeared to stand in contrast with their acknowledgement of the material realities and social facts faced by language learners and users. While they had described their belief in language learning as an unalienated activity in which people and groups could appropriate the language however they saw fit, their suggestion that language learning was essentially an investment in human capital for most people seemed to negate these values. Chapter 5 focused on how I highlighted some of these apparent contradictions and explored the participants' responses to my interventions over the course of our lessons together. The purpose of this final data-focused chapter is to examine how the participants' framing had changed after the course had concluded. At the end of the course, the participants were given one final assignment designed to elicit statements of belief from all the students to see if the interventions taken during the course left a lasting impact on their framing, and therefore on the beliefs such framing represented. In describing how their framing stood at the end of the course, I hope to illustrate two things: (1) that the frame analysis approach did have an effect on their framing; and (2) that the final frame they settled on was not identical to the views expressed during the classroom discussions. As a corollary to the second point, I hope to emphasize that researchers cannot assume the first reaction of their participants is going to be a lasting one. The analysis of data in this chapter will demonstrate that there had been some influence of the frame analysis approach on the views of the participants. However, I will also caution researchers to be careful not to overestimate their influence, and will suggest using more longitudinal forms of

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data collection to see how the framing looks after the dust has settled. I will describe in this chapter how the participants ended with, what seems to me at least, a subtly altered frame.

Rationale for the final project

The preceding chapter focused on ways in which counter-framing can be fostered and encouraged in a frame analysis study. This is accomplished through the raising of apparent contradictions to a level of consciousness among the participants, in ways both immediate and delayed. However, as explained in Chapter 4, there is no simple line directly from presenting participants with contradictions to the participants questioning their master framing and beginning to express instances of radical counter-framing. As already shown in the previous chapter, responses to the raising of contradictions can be wide-ranging, from cases in which participants ignore the contradiction entirely to those in which dramatic shifts in framing are evident. However, it is also the case that these responses emerge in the moment of the contradiction being raised, and as such may not be representative of how the participants' beliefs and ideas will develop going forward. In some cases, an initial example of strong counter-framing may be tempered over time and through reflection, eventually resulting in a more moderate set of beliefs. On the other hand, it may be the case that an initially muted response to the raising of contradictions represents only the beginning of a process of rethinking and reconsidering which may lead to the gradual intensification of beliefs over time. This is all to say that the initial responses to the raising of contradictions to a level of consciousness, as presented in the previous chapter, may be the result of the ideas being only briefly considered and explored. With time and distance, these responses are likely to alter and evolve, in ways that the researcher cannot predict, and should not seek to control. This should not be surprising, as all qualitative research, or at least all such research reports, can only present a snapshot of a community or group at a particular moment.

Given these points, the researcher may choose to investigate how the views of the participants develop over time through a more longitudinal collection of data, including, perhaps, follow-up studies or brief "check-ins" with the participants at some point after the formal conclusion of the study. This will allow the researcher to see how the views of the participants may have evolved, regressed, strengthened, or weakened, compared with their initial manifestations in the period of the study proper. This may in turn also illustrate the weaknesses of the method and help the researcher to rework or reconfigure their approach for future studies. In addition to providing useful data about the long-term effects of the frame analysis approach, conducting follow-up studies also provides the researcher with opportunities to examine the complexity of participants' views, a point which helps escape the potential criticism that the qualitative report reduces and essentializes the subjects of a research project to their appearance in a

specific moment in time, and as seen through the necessarily limited perspective of the researcher (Gutting, 2001; Said, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021).

In this chapter, I will present some data from my own limited attempt at a more longitudinal form of data collection, drawing particularly on the final project the students were asked to complete at the end of the course. Through an analysis of the framing evident in this final project, I hope to show how some of the participants' beliefs evolved over time and how some stayed relatively stable. I will also present some of the key ideas they appear to have settled on. This is necessarily a messy process, and my reading of it is necessarily selective, as I have had to limit myself to the major themes of the dialogue rather than exploring every tangent and digression contained therein. However, it is possible to see patterns emerging, which show a development of the participants' ideas away from their initial master-framing, and towards a set of views which display an awareness of the social facts and material realities influencing language learning and use. Importantly, the ideas expressed in the project illustrate an increased level of understanding of the fact that the world would have to change in order to realize the socially liberal ideals expressed by the participants.

The project

For the final project, the students were asked to engage in a series of recorded discussions together related to topics studied in the course. They were then asked to use the ideas from their discussions to produce a final co-authored report written in the form of a dialogue between the four of them. The written dialogue was supposed to retain the substance of their discussions, while organizing their ideas into a more coherent form. The project was designed with both pedagogical and research purposes in mind. The research purpose was, as stated in the rationale above, to capture a moment in the evolution of the participants' views at a period shortly removed from the study. The pedagogical purpose of the project was for the students to dialogically reflect together on what they had learned, and thus to continue the process of reflection and negotiation of views that had occurred during the class itself.

There were several stages to this project:

Stage 1: In the final week of the class, the students were provided with written instructions for how to complete the project (see Appendix D for these instructions). These instructions explained the structure of the project, described how the project should be carried out, and included some prompts for the students to consider when taking part in their group discussions. These prompts were intended to guide the overall shape of the project. However, the students were given a reasonable amount of freedom in how they could conduct the discussions, the amount of focus they could give to each topic, and the way in which the final piece could be written.

Stage 2: The students were then required to work as a group and engage in several recorded discussions over the course of a few days. The exact timeframe of the discussions was left up to the students, but it was made clear that their work was to be based on multiple discussions, rather than only one.
Stage 3: Following the discussions, the participants were asked to listen back to the recordings and make notes together about the most salient themes that emerged from their dialogues.
Stage 4: Finally, the students were asked to use these notes to produce a co-authored report written in the style of a dialogue between the four of them. This final report was required to reproduce the main ideas each of the students presented during their discussions. However, rather than directly reproducing verbatim the things they had said in their discussions, they were expected to write a semi-fictionalized dialogue which presented the themes in a coherent way, rather than in the more scattered and untidy way in which they may have emerged during the discussions themselves. They also added some references to key literature, and otherwise formalized the ideas presented.

Once the dialogue was finished, it was to be submitted to the teacher for comments. The project was set in the final week of the class and was submitted a couple of weeks later by Chiara on behalf of the group.

The exact shape of the discussions and final project were left relatively open so as to encourage the exploration and negotiation of ideas. However, as explained above, the students were provided with a list of topics which they were asked to reflect on. These were designed to draw the students back to some key issues of the course, especially those which had been the subject of class discussions focused on apparent contradictions. The themes the participants were asked to focus on during these discussions were:

1. The historical and theoretical development of English as a lingua franca and related concepts such as translanguaging.
2. The relevance of language, and of English as a lingua franca, to people's identities.
3. Whether it is possible for English as a lingua franca to be used in our current society.
4. Whether it is a good idea for English as a lingua franca to be taught in schools, or whether schools should continue to focus on inner-circle varieties of English. Will ELF help students to communicate in the future? Will it help them to get jobs? Will it be useful for students taking university entrance exams?
5. Related to 4: how could ELF become accepted more widely? What might need to change for this to happen? Are these things that should happen?

The final submission was six pages long, and roughly 4000 words in length, indicating that about 1000 words were contributed by each student. The final

form of the project was written in a playscript style, with each participant taking a "turn," preceded by their name. For example:

MARIA: Yes, to who, as García, has always seen one's linguistic ability as a "language continuum, with the languages mutually influencing one/each other,"[1] it may appear hard and of no use to create two different definition, since they have always seen one's linguistic resource as a fluid repertoire.

RIKO: I agree. For monolingual people, like me, it is difficult to control several languages in the same way. So I think that translanguaging is similar to multilingualism, and too abstract for me.

CHIARA: My question is: what does monolingualism mean to you, and why do you say you are monolingual if you speak more than one language?

At the beginning of the dialogue, these turns were relatively short, as in the examples above. However, as the dialogue progressed the turns became longer, with each student exhibiting a desire to incorporate as many of the ideas being discussed as possible into their stated views. The students did not take written turns in any kind of systematic order, and the dialogue shifted between sections which were dominated by the voices of some of the students and those where the voices of others were more prominent. Despite different voices being more visible in different sections of the dialogue, each student was able to share a substantial amount of ideas in the final piece. The quality of the contributions from each student, and the depth of the discussion on display, made the final project a rich source of data through which to examine the evolving framing of the participants.

The choice of dialogic reflection as the format of the project was influenced by my work using the research method of duoethnography, a relatively novel research process in which two (or more) researchers examine a topic through the fractured lens of their differing life histories (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). Duoethnographers engage in a series of recorded dialogues about the topic of their study. After each discussion they reflect on what was said and use this as the basis of the next discussion. Following these multiple, recursive discussions, the researchers then code the data and (most often, although not always) produce semi-fictionalized playscript-style dialogues as a creative and accessible form of research report. These dialogues are intended to retain the substance of the data, while changing its form to increase audience accessibility. The goal of a duoethnography is to bring about change in the participants through dialogue; that is, for the participants to develop new understandings of a phenomenon through the process of comparing how that phenomenon has influenced their lives in different ways (Sawyer & Norris, 2013; Breault, 2016). As such, I felt that a final project carried out in a similar way would be more revealing than a series of essays or presentations. Having experimented with duoethnography as a form of project-based language

learning in some of my previous classes (see Lowe, 2018; Lowe & Lawrence, 2023), I hoped that this dialogic project would both spur on and capture the continuing process of reflection on the topics covered in the class among the participants.

Examining the final report

When reading the co-authored dialogue that the students produced for the final project, the first thing that struck me was the fractured and inconclusive qualities the piece exhibited. This was perhaps unsurprising, as it was based on a four-way discussion between the students, in which they were questioning and negotiating viewpoints, with no real demand or expectation that they should reach a shared conclusion. Indeed, I felt that to impose such a requirement would have been contrary to the spirit of dialogue and democracy in which the frame analysis approach is based. I was also concerned that it would perhaps have forced a false consensus to emerge which may not have been representative of the participants' true feelings and beliefs. As such, it was challenging to make sense of the final project as data, but after carefully reading through it a number of times, some themes did begin to emerge. In this section I will try to extract some patterns from the dialogue and highlight some of the trends which emerged, while also giving some critical commentary when necessary.

Defining key terms

As might be expected for a class of students encountering topics such as ELF, translanguaging, and native-speakerism in a limited way for the first time, there were occasional misconceptions about the meaning and implications of these ideas. There were also some ideas and concepts that became more prominent in this discussion than they had been earlier in the course. As such, at the outset, there are two terms that need to be addressed: *identity* and *ELF*.

One key term which came up multiple times in the discussion was *identity*. This had emerged in some of the data presented in Chapter 4, but it took on much more salience in this discussion. This is partly because it was the subject of the second discussion prompt, and admittedly it was presented there in an ill-defined way. I added this as a prompt based on the fact it was a theme that had emerged in our earlier discussions, but the concept of "identity" itself had not really been discussed in depth, and so the use of the concept in the final report is rather fluid and inconsistent. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly address the ways the participants used the term and what they meant by it in this report.

In their discussions, the students seemed to conceive of identity in two ways. Occasionally, they talked about "national identities," which seemed related to how individuals are ascribed or inhabit identity positions based on their country of birth. For Mina and Chiara, language appeared to be

strongly connected to their national identities, and this appeared to influence their thinking. For example, at one point in the assignment during which the students were discussing questions around language and identity, the following quotes emerged:

MINA: In my case, my biggest identity regarding language or nationality is totally Japanese, so if I were told not to use Japanese anymore, I would definitely feel like I lost the biggest part of me. Since there are certain concepts or expressions that are unique to the Japanese language, and it can be hard for us to explain those in other languages, I would feel really sad and ashamed to lose the opportunity to use them. But, when it comes to English, it would not be the same case as Japanese for me. English can become one of my identities, but it is not as strong as Japanese.

CHIARA: I know that I am very emotionally attached to Italian, in the sense that it lets me express my emotions with more purpose and intentions behind them, whereas this doesn't apply to Japanese and English.

In the cases above, the students seemed to be conceiving of language as intimately connected to their national identity, and as a primary way in which this aspect of their identity is constituted.

More often, however, the participants appeared to conceive of identity as something developed by an individual through their ongoing interactions with the world, and which can therefore be both formed and expressed through their language use. This is reminiscent of both a sociocultural perspective on identity formation (McEntee-Atalianis, 2018) and the practical-experimental process of human development described by Jaeggi (2014). As discussed in Chapter 2, Jaeggi suggests that humans engage in acts of self-creation through experimentally appropriating the world around them for their own purposes. The students most often seemed to conceive of identity formation as occurring in roughly this way. Thus, while Mina and Chiara expressed a strong personal connection to their first languages, they also acknowledged at numerous times that language is something people should be able to freely appropriate for the purposes of self-creation and identity development. Their broadly liberal ideals around language use allowed their own personal dispositions to sit comfortably alongside a permissive attitude to how others may use and appropriate language for the purposes of their individual identity development. This is the subject of the first discourse discussed in the next section.

A second term that was used in a somewhat ambiguous way was "ELF." In the course, the students had studied the concepts of ELF and translanguaging, and seemed to understand the distinctions to some degree. However, in this report, they appeared to at times elide the concepts, or to occasionally use one in place of the other. After reading the dialogue multiple times, it seems to me that the students were using "ELF" sometimes in the way it would be understood by ELF scholars, and sometimes as a kind of shorthand

for any perspective which valorizes non-standard or non-inner circle forms of English use. This means that occasionally translanguaging and even world Englishes appear to have been subsumed under the label of "ELF." Therefore, when reading the discussion in this section, I would ask readers to take the term "ELF" in a fairly broad sense, and to understand that this use of the term reflects the ideas of students who were still coming to terms with the concepts discussed in the course.

With these terms in place, I will now turn to the discussion of the framing that was present in the final project report. As with the master frame described in Chapter 4, I will describe this new counter-frame in terms of the key discourses from which it was constructed.

Discourse 1: ELF as a positive and empowering idea

The first discourse which was strongly evident in the dialogue was that ELF (broadly understood) was seen as a positive idea, and one that is empowering for users of the language. The positive elements of ELF from the point of view of the students focused on two key points: confidence, and identity as a language user. The first of these can be seen in the following quotes:

RIKO: (…) through this class, I learned about ELF and became more confident without mastering the types of English that are commonly used as role models, such as American English and British English.

CHIARA: (…) I also think that the possibility of using ELF to make communication smoother, embracing differences but also the occasional mistakes a speaker could make in conversation can truly be liberating, because it frees the English learner from the pressure of having a "perfect" pronunciation and a "native-like" proficiency. And this is exactly why I find Kachru's model of the use of English and the subsequent notion of "world Englishes" to be so groundbreaking and innovative.

MARIA: (…) English has always been a useful support when needed. I am now sincerely aware that my speeches in English are neither correct, nor high-level English, but what is most important to me is that the person I am talking to understands the message. However, I would like to be more proficient in English. The fact that I'm aware of not being the most proficient ELF speaker does not stop me from acting like one of them, since I believe it helps me with my confidence and, consequently, in keeping practising.

All of these quotes illustrate the belief that ELF and related ideas are important for developing the confidence of all users of English, regardless of their backgrounds. Rather than always seeing themselves as deficient in comparison with 'native speakers,' the participants suggested that users of

English can become more confident through adopting an ELF-aware perspective and focusing on successful instances of communication, rather than forever chasing an elusive ideal that may not even truly exist. The language used by the students reinforced the idea that, through ELF, users of English could become confident "without mastering the types of English that are commonly used as role models," through "embracing differences but also the occasional mistakes a speaker could make" and focusing on making sure "that the person I am talking to understands the message." In other words, instead of adopting a negative view in which the learner is always trying to imitate the 'native speaker,' the students focused on the importance of message over medium, and the rather radical idea that linguistic differences could be embraced and capitalized on for their communicative utility. This focus on confidence is one way in which the value of ELF was expressed by the participants.

Another way in which ELF was framed as positive and empowering was in the idea that it can be personalized, and thus used to both form and express a person's identity. This can be seen in Chiara's suggestion that "embracing differences" can be "truly liberating." Rather than focusing solely on the linguistic utility of the ELF perspective, the students also suggested at times that these differences can be a way of positively expressing a speaker's unique identity. This can be seen in the following quote:

MARIA: (…) But I also know that, somehow, everyone will personalize the English they learned. The focus on the inner circle varieties in schools, in my opinion, makes the students too fixated on grammar rules and "correct pronunciation" and does not give enough importance to the aspect of communication. Maybe it would be fine to let the students decide if they want to continue their studies on an ELF path or on a "inner-circle" path.

In this quote, Maria again emphasizes the importance of the "aspect of communication," but also suggests that adopting an ELF perspective can be positive for the development of a person's identity, as it will allow people to "personalize" their English in a way that is suitable for them. She criticizes the ways in which schools focus on inner-circle Englishes, suggesting that this causes the students to obsess over correctness, and suggests instead that students be given the choice of which type of English to study, thus allowing them to have more control over their language learning goals, and potentially being able to follow a path in which their English study can be more closely related to their identity development and personal needs. This was an ideal which was central to the final conclusions drawn by the students, as will be seen when we get to discourse 4 later in this chapter.

A similar point is made by Mina, who, despite her apparently more conservative sentiments around language and national identity (as described earlier in this chapter), suggests that:

MINA: (…) while translanguaging may diminish a person's national identity, it may be effective in encouraging individuals to establish their own unique identities.

In this quote, which occurred during a section of the discussion focused on language and culture, Mina first suggests that translanguaging may "diminish a person's national identity," but then concedes that it could help encourage people to establish "their own unique identities." Here we see first Mina's own feeling that, for her, language and culture are very closely connected, and so she would not want to engage in activities such as translanguaging, lest it diminish her own identity. This may seem puzzling to translanguaging scholars, as it is often argued that one goal of translanguaging should be to allow a person to express their national identity through English, rather than forcing them to use English in a way which reflects the national identity of a particular inner-circle nation (Kim & Lee, 2024). Clearly, Mina had understood this in a different way, and worried that translanguaging would serve to dilute national identity through minimizing the correspondence between nation and language. While seeing this as a potential concern, she concedes that the focus of the translanguaging perspective on the development of individual linguistic repertoires could allow for people to develop their own identities through the creative use of the language and inventive mixing of linguistic resources. While Mina did not herself feel a strong connection between English and her identity, she allowed that for others the flexibility of ELF and translanguaging perspectives may provide an opportunity to develop and express their own unique identities.

In sum, the participants continued to hold to the positive orientation towards ELF and world Englishes which seemed evident in their master framing at the start of the course. This was the orientation that I described as representative of a social liberalism, and was related to the idea that English is a tool which can be appropriated by all those who use it, and which can be reconfigured by individuals in unique ways to express their particular individual identities. While the students encountered the specific concepts of ELF, translanguaging and world Englishes for the first time in this course, they seem to have mapped them quite neatly onto the beliefs they had initially expressed at the outset of the study. While using new labels to describe these beliefs, it is clear the students continued to hold to the idea that English, as a global language, could be appropriated by any of its speakers and users (and communities of users) for their own purposes. However, what was also clear was that they had begun to consider how these beliefs were complicated by the material realities and social facts which may prevent this ideal of language use from being realized.

Discourse 2: English as a common resource in theory, but not in practice

The first point that the students mentioned as potentially preventing people from taking ownership of English and using it in their own unique ways was

related to dominant cultural expectations around language use. In their master framing, the students had expressed the idea that English is a communication tool that can act as a common resource for all users of the language. However, our classroom discussions had raised an apparent contradiction between this conception of English, and their own seeming association of English with the cultures of inner circle countries. While at the time they had resisted addressing this contradiction, in this dialogue they appeared to acknowledge much more overtly that there was an opposition between the idea of English as a common resource, and of English as the property of the inner circle countries from which it originated. This is a sentiment which can be seen in the following quote:

CHIARA: I also think that such a concept [ELF] may put the 'native speakers' in quite the difficult situation, because not only does it redefine the concept of "language," but, in doing so, it also challenges the idea of identity that 'native speakers' have developed in regards to their culture, their territory and their mother tongue.

In this extract, Chiara expresses the idea that ELF may be seen as a challenge to the identities of 'native speakers,' and to the feelings of cultural heritage they may hold in connection to the English language. This was a concern expressed at numerous points by the participants throughout the dialogue, and was something they saw as a serious obstacle to ELF use becoming accepted. In our class discussions, as discussed in the previous chapter, there had been a seeming contradiction between the ideas the students expressed of all Englishes being equal, of English being a "tool" for international communication, and their strong association of English with the cultures of inner-circle countries. In the classroom discussions themselves, the students had resisted the implications of this contradiction, and had attempted to argue that English is different from other languages because it operates as a global language. As noted in the previous chapter, I felt this ignored the fact that they themselves had demonstrated a belief that English was culturally bound to inner-circle countries. In the final project, the students appeared to have taken on board the implications of this contradiction, and acknowledged that the strong association between English and certain inner-circle countries would be a barrier to English being adopted and adapted freely, as it could be if it really were a common resource.

In addition to this flexible form of English use probably being rejected owing to the cultural association it has with inner-circle countries, the students also suggested that ongoing feelings of linguistic inferiority among 'non-native speakers' of the language would prevent its use as a common resource. This is illustrated in the following quote from Mina:

MINA: People in countries such as India and Singapore, where many people speak English as their second language, may [not] worry about their

> language ability, since it is easier for them to establish their own English and make it known to the rest of the world. However, people in countries like Japan, where English speaking is not as promoted as in other countries, are more likely to worry about their pronunciation and content when speaking with people from other countries. Even if the ELF idea gains traction, the majority of Japanese will still think that their accented English is wrong and immature.

In this extract, Mina suggests that speakers of forms of English originating in the outer circle may be able to get their variety of English accepted by the rest of the world because they speak it as a second or official language. On the other hand, she suggests that in expanding circle countries such as Japan, where English is not promoted as an official language, feelings of linguistic inferiority around issues such as pronunciation may continue to influence their ability to use the language freely. We should perhaps be sceptical of Mina's claim that those in the outer circle will have little difficulty in obtaining recognition for their English(es). While some "official" recognition has being granted towards these varieties, such as the inclusion of Nigerian English words in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Salazar, 2023; Ugwuanyi, 2022),[2] there is still evidence of linguistic discrimination against speakers of non-inner-circle varieties of English, particularly in fields like language teaching (Fedorova & Kaur, 2022; Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2024; Mugford & Rubio Michel, 2018). Nevertheless, Mina's central point was that cultural expectations around what can be considered "correct" or "valid" English will influence the ways in which people learn and use the language in contexts such as Japan. As suggested by scholars such as O'Regan (2021), this is likely to influence the educational and employment prospects of those who attempt to take ownership of English and develop a unique linguistic identity in relation to it.

In the students' original master framing, they had suggested that English is a common resource that can be adopted and adapted by all those who use it for their own purposes. However, our classroom discussions revealed a tension between this idea and their seeming conception of English as belonging to those countries in the inner circle with which English is traditionally most closely associated. While they resisted discussing the implications of these contradictions during the class itself, by the time they came to write the final report these implications appear to have taken on greater salience for them. They acknowledged that there is a serious disconnect between these two views, and that the flexible use of English as a common resource may not be realizable when it is still considered the property of specific cultures and countries. With regard to the variability of ELF, Chiara summarized the new framing by stating that "these are but theoretical claims, and I think they should probably be treated as such."

Discourse 3: Educational factors preventing ELF adoption

The third major discourse that characterized the framing shared by the students in the project was the notion that it may not be possible to actualize ELF, and related ideas such as translanguaging, owing to certain material factors. This discourse echoed several of the discussions we had in class, as outlined in the previous two chapters, in which the students displayed a recognition that certain material forces might prevent people from truly using English in a free and self-directed way. In the final project, this was raised and discussed rather overtly, with the majority of the discussion focused on education and exams.

It was noted earlier that the students believed that ELF might be a difficult proposition in Japan because of entrenched feelings of linguistic inferiority, and one way in which they suggested that these feelings were propagated was through education. This discussion was prompted by Maria, who asked: "Do you think that nowadays people are still worrying too much about their language skills or do you think that the development of different English varieties and the diffusion of ELF changed people's perspective and made their language confidence stronger?" In response to this, Riko answered:

RIKO: I feel that many Japanese people are relatively insecure about their ability to speak English. I believe this is because English education in Japan focuses on reading, writing, and listening. And when ELF permeates the world, I feel that even people who are not confident in their language skills will gain confidence.

In this short quote, Riko expresses the idea that Japanese people may feel insecure about their English speaking ability owing to the focus on receptive skills and on written forms of the language that are prevalent in Japanese English education. She appears to be critiquing current forms of Japanese education, at least as she understands them, for not putting enough focus on productive skills. In addition, she implies that for Japanese users of English to become more secure and confident in their use of the language, more focus should be placed on speaking, and suggests that the ELF perspective would allow people to develop more confidence in their use of the language.

However, as Mina points out, the education system itself is geared towards helping students pass the high-stakes tests which grant access to higher education. The importance and ubiquity of these tests mean that they strongly influence, if not dictate, what must be focused on in earlier stages of education. This is evident in the following quote:

MINA: Also, when we look at the situation of English education in Japan, it might be hard for students to learn English with a focus on communication unless the Japanese educational and examination system changes.

> They do not have enough time to learn such English skills that are not needed for most common entrance examinations because all they are expected to do is obtain high scores on tests and enter high-level universities. Thus, not everyone in other countries can do ELF study.

In this quote, Mina emphasizes the role that exams play in influencing the types of English chosen to be the focus of English lessons. Once again, this echoes discussions that took place over the course of the semester, focused on the fact that students must prepare for these exams, and if they fail to learn the forms of English used in the exams, they will lose access to the educational opportunities that passing the exams may afford. This will in turn deny them access to the capital represented by that education, leading potentially to knock-on effects throughout their lives.

The third of the discourses which comprised the new framing of the students was one which recognized the current material realities that might prevent English learners and users from adopting an ELF perspective, or more broadly from attempting to adapt English to their own purposes as a way of expressing their unique identities. In particular, they felt that educational pressures would stand in the way of achieving a more locally relevant and communicatively focused approach to language learning and use.

Discourse 4: The necessity of coexistence

The final major discourse I was able to identify in the group project was focused on an attempt by the students to reconcile their belief that English should be a tool for all to freely use and adapt as they see fit, with the material realities described in the previous two sections. Towards the end of the project, the participants produced four statements that summarized their views, and which each came to the same basic conclusion: the need for "coexistence" between the ELF perspective (that is, that English is a tool that can be used by individuals and groups for their own unique purposes) and the forms of English spoken in the inner-circle. I will present the four quotes (with some slight editing to avoid repetition) as they appeared in the text, and then provide some commentary tying them together:

RIKO: I too regard English as a pleasing tool to achieve communication with people of different nationalities. However, Maria's opinion made me realize that this could be seen as ignoring the culture of the language that English-speaking people have. It occurred to me that the perception that the English spoken by English-speaking people is the standard is perhaps biased. I thought, based on these points, that there are two sides to the English language. The first is cultural English, spoken by English-speaking people. The second is English as a lingua franca, and as Maria said,

those who see English as a transnational communication tool should also look at the cultural aspects that it contains.

MINA: That is so true that the language and its cultures are deeply connected. As a Japanese student, I have learned American English at schools through the years. Basically the purpose of the lessons was for the entrance exams not for communication. During the process, I also learned some of the American cultures regardless of the teacher's intentions. Because when we use English, those cultural backgrounds are necessary. For example, in English, the order in which sentences are constructed with the main subject is completely different from that in Japanese. These grammatical characteristics are closely related to the cultural background in which English speakers use more direct expressions than Japanese. Thus, even though I am Japanese and we do not use such expressions that much in our daily lives, when I talk in English I use more direct words. As an English user, I personally consider myself affected by some American culture when I use English. Regardless of the way we were taught, I think that probably we naturally absorb the culture associated with English. (…). So I completely agree with the part that Maria mentioned "Maybe it would be fine to let the students decide if they want to continue their studies on an ELF path or on an 'inner-circle' path."

CHIARA: I, too, agree with this perspective of ELF. I started studying English when I was just a kid, and I don't think I can remember days in which I didn't know at least how to communicate in English. Maybe it's because of this personal experience of mine that we have differing views on English as a language. You all said multiple times that you see English as a "tool" that can help you communicate with potentially everybody. I, on the other hand, wouldn't define it as such. I don't really know what English is for me as of now, I know that it helped me explore all my hobbies, it brought me culture in the forms of the countless books I read in the original language, and, consequently, insight on cultures and countries (inner circle ones exclusively) far away from mine. Considering this emotional attachment, it wouldn't feel right for me to completely disregard the link between the language and the culture, but I also think it would be, simply put, untrue to disregard the other, very much important link between a language and the people who speak it. Hence why I, too, think that the ELF perspective and the inner circle perspective should be separated, but this would also mean that they must find a way to coexist.

MARIA: However, I think ELF is helpful to find a job and to open more doors in the academic world. Not only helpful, but sometimes really necessary. Since nowadays English is something needed to succeed in a career and a lot of people study English for this reason, regardless of the culture of the inner circle, I think ELF is already becoming more and more diffused. For what does not concern this field, I think that, to

> expand the use of ELF, people should start thinking about English as something that is not necessarily connected to a standard and worrying more about achieving communication with their own strategies. English is a language, not a set of impositions. Communication, as it happens in every language, is something that may or not be achieved because of many factors, it is something normal.

The four participants converged on the notion that there are two potential paths to learning English, an "inner-circle path" and an "ELF path," and that people should be free to decide which path they want to follow based on their own needs, purposes, and desires. This might seem to remove world Englishes from the equation, but taken in the context of the rest of the dialogue (and as mentioned earlier), it seems that the students were using "ELF path" as a sort of imperfect shorthand to describe any varieties or uses of English which diverge from "standard" inner-circle forms. The ability of students to choose the form of English they would like to study was a point first made earlier in the dialogue by Maria, who suggested that "Maybe it would be fine to let the students decide if they want to continue their studies on an ELF path or on an 'inner-circle' path." This was a suggestion that, finally, all the students ended up agreeing on.

In these statements, the students attempted to steer a course between the idea of English as the property of inner-circle nations, and English as a common resource. They suggested that both conceptions of English should exist, and should be freely available to those who wish to study them. Maria herself, despite having been the first to voice the idea of coexistence, ended the dialogue on perhaps the most strident voicing of support for ELF and for people's freedom to learn and use the language in their own ways. Stating that English is "a language, not a set of impositions," Maria concluded the project by arguing forcefully that ELF could be important for those engaged in international communication, and thus that people "should start thinking about English as something that is not necessarily connected to a standard and worrying more about achieving communication with their own strategies." In Maria's statement, we again see reinforced the belief that people should have freedom about language use, and that adopting an ELF perspective could potentially offer them something of this freedom. While Maria was the most decisive in expressing this sentiment, it is one that was endorsed by all the participants.

The final discourse neatly highlighted the idiosyncrasies of the group with regard to their ideas about language, while also pointing towards a shared vision of how English language learning should be. While they had some reservations about the potential (in their minds) dangers of ELF completely breaking the link between inner-circle countries and English as a whole, they also suggested that people should have a free choice to decide which forms of English to focus on when learning the language, and the freedom to use and

adapt it for their own purposes, whether those be related to enjoying the culture and literature of inner-circle countries, or finding new ways to use the language for their unique expressive and communicative purposes. They argued, in short, for the ability of people to freely adopt or adapt English as they please in order to develop their own identities with regard to the language. They thus held to their vision of unalienated language learning and use.

Summary of the new frame

The students began the programme with a framing informed by socially liberal ideals of cultural diversity and pluralism (in which English is viewed as a common resource, and as a tool for communication) and neoliberal ideas around English learning as a way of accumulating human capital (Becker, 1993). While each of these discourses was espoused with varying strength by each of the students in the class, they were nevertheless a shared set of beliefs, and thus constituted what I have termed the initial "master frame" of the participants. This appeared to be a stable set of ideas which worked harmoniously together.

Over the course of the semester, however, the students gradually began to question some of these beliefs, as they were exposed to contradictions between their master framing and their implicit understanding of the social and material influences of the world in which they live. This understanding included the notion that English is still seen by many (including, seemingly, the students themselves) as being owned by inner circle nations, and the idea that some Englishes are more valuable than others for various kinds of employment, as well as for passing high-stakes university entrance exams (and with the understanding that passing these exams may lead to success in employment). By analysing the contradictions between the students' framing and their acknowledged social and material reality, it was possible to unfold the logic of the conceptual principles which made up their master frame, and demonstrate how these would lead to self-negation in practice. The students came to express an understanding, in other words, that mirrors the work of scholars such as O'Regan (2021) and Kubota (2024), who argues that "even if we resist the normative language ideology by encouraging students to translanguage, doing so will not lead to transformation unless the neoliberal assessment system is changed" (p. 9).

This change in perspective was accomplished to some extent through my awareness-raising interventions as a researcher, in which I sought to bring these contradictions to the surface and thus trigger rethinking and the reformulation of ideas. Through this process, the participants came to recognize the capital tied to inner-circle (Kachru, 1985) forms of the language, which would make it difficult for all varieties and uses to truly be equal. They further became increasingly aware of how deeply culture and language are connected, both in their minds and in the mind of the public at large. Thus, while

they mostly continued to understand English as a "tool" for communication and personal advancement, this understanding gradually shifted. Their initial framing saw English as a common resource available to all its users, which could be used as a tool by all speakers to achieve their own ends. However, in the final project this had shifted to a more critical view that understood that English is still (whether they liked it or not!) popularly linked to forms of the language developed in the countries of the inner-circle for both historical and economic reasons (O'Regan, 2021), and that as a result of this the ways in which people can adapt English to their own purposes are limited by dominant expectations and requirements around language use.

Through the semester, the participants responded in a number of ways to these apparent contradictions. These responses ranged from denying or refusing to acknowledge the contradictions to suggestions for radical social change. By the end of the course, they appeared to have settled on the more pragmatic compromise that constituted the final discourse outlined above, in which they suggested a way must be established for these two to coexist, with learners free to choose the form of English they would prefer to study. In terms of the frame analysis approach, the students ended on what I would consider a form of abstract counter-framing. As stated in Chapter 3, this is a response in which "participants demonstrate becoming aware of contradictions, and suggest the need for change in the abstract." In this case, the participants suggested the need for an equal "coexistence" between inner-circle Englishes and ELF (broadly understood), with people free to choose which path to follow. In this, they perhaps voice a view in line with ELF scholars such as Kohn (2018; 2020; 2022), who emphasizes that the learning or use of ELF does not necessarily stand at odds with inner-circle forms of English, but rather adds a new dimension to studying the language and provides options for learners to develop "a true sense of ownership and agency as speakers of English" (Kohn, 2018, p. 14). Similarly, the students argued for a situation in which learners could be free to learn and use English in the ways that suit them best, and thus avoid their alienation as users of the language.

This constantly shifting set of views illustrates the nature of the frame analysis process in action. Rather than a clear and unidirectional shift of ideas, we see the perspectives of the students developing through constant change and negotiation with each other, with the researcher, and within themselves. Their final counter-framing might not represent the radical change that a critical researcher may hope for, but it certainly points to an unsettling of perspectives, and a seeming awareness of the limits of the ideology that had earlier characterized their views.

What appeared to be lacking from this final frame were the more radical suggestions of how the students' values could potentially be actualized. There were some small hints in this direction. For example, Mina suggested the need to change the Japanese education and testing system, while Maria hinted at the idea of awareness raising when she said that "people should start thinking

about English as something that is not necessarily connected to a standard." However, these were rather vague ideas, and did not amount to much more than gestures in the direction of change without any stronger backing. Suggestions for practical action that might lead to the emancipatory vision the students put forward were rather thin on the ground. In this, they retreated from the more radical suggestions for social change vocalized during the course, and this seems to be of a piece with the more tempered and moderate ideas which informed the new shared framing that was evident in the final project.

At this point, I wish to address one potential interpretation that readers may draw from this. At the start of the study, the participants espoused a set of beliefs that many progressive language teachers and critical applied linguists would agree with. They voiced beliefs around language that reflect many of the highest ideals we hold our profession to—the equality of all Englishes, the common ownership of English, and the equal respect that should be afforded to all speakers and users of the language. By the end of the study, they appeared to become somewhat more cautious about these claims, and began to discuss more clearly the need for people to study certain forms of the language for academic or professional advancement. There is thus a danger that readers may interpret this as a conservative regression of their views, away from the social liberalism they displayed in their master framing at the start of the study, and towards the more conservative beliefs of writers such as Quirk (1989), who argued that "It is neither liberal nor liberating to permit learners to settle for lower standards than the best, and it is a travesty of liberalism to tolerate low standards which will lock the least fortunate into the least rewarding careers" (pp. 22–23). This is a possible conclusion of the classroom discussions that even I had found myself drifting towards on occasion, as noted in Chapter 5.

However, I feel this would be a misinterpretation. At no point did the students abandon those beliefs as things that *should* be true. At no point did they suggest all varieties of English *should not* be equal, or that certain Englishes *should* be considered of higher value than others. Rather than arguing that these should not be ideals for English learning and use, their new framing seemed to suggest that they are values that are currently unrealized in our society. They continued to suggest that these ideals are both possible and laudable, and are values to which we should aspire. But they are not yet values that have been achieved. They are values which are immanent, but unrealized in society. Indeed, at certain points during the study they suggested that we ought to change society to actualize those values, but they also realized that for the time being they remain only potentialities, and not realities. Thus, I would suggest that any interpretation of the participants' views as having taken a conservative turn would be mistaken. Rather, I believe their views have become more progressive, as they demonstrate a greater level of consciousness around the reality of the social order, and the conditions that would be needed to transform it into something truly liberating in which people could make free choices around how they learn and use the language.

By the end of the study, the participants seemed to believe that English should be a common resource owned by all, and that all the varieties of English around the world should be equal, with learners free to choose which forms to study and how to engage with the language. However, they also recognized that currently this is an ideal that has yet to be achieved. During the course of the study this led them to suggest ways in which these values could potentially be realized. Whether or not we agree with their solutions is beside the point—what is important is that they recognized and reconciled the contradictions between their framing and the social world they inhabit, and developed a progressive set of ideas that would allow for people's free interaction with the language, to as great an extent as possible. Rather than being pacified by their initial master frame, in which these contradictions were smoothed over, they appear to have become more acutely aware of some of the tensions between these ideas and the pressures of the real world. In response, they put forward a vision of coexistence between the different forms of the language, which would require social change to accomplish. In this new framing, their beliefs appear no longer to function as an ideological screen, naturalizing current conditions and helping to reproduce them. Rather, they are unsatisfied values, and the factors that have frustrated their realization have been identified. This is not a roadmap to a better world, but it is, at least, a directional arrow.

Issues and future possibilities

As explained at the start of this chapter, this project had two goals. The first, in the context of the course on which the students were studying, was to provide a capstone assessment that would indicate the level of understanding of the material covered and encourage continuing dialogue and reflection after the course had concluded. The second goal of the task, and the more important for the purposes of this chapter, was to examine how the participants' responses to the contradictions raised during the course of the research may have evolved and developed. While the participants displayed reactions ranging from essentially ignoring the contradictions ("frame maintenance") to voicing a need for radical change ("counter-framing") during the research process itself, whether or not these views would stay as initially expressed was unclear. Through this final project, I hoped to see how the participants' framing may have evolved and developed over time, and either advanced or retreated from their initial positions. The project thus represented a limited attempt to gather some longitudinal data about the developing framing of the participants following the conclusion of the course. The method presented here was fruitful, and, as illustrated in this chapter, revealed some of the ways in which the frame analysis approach contributed to the developing ideas of the students. However, there are also ways in which it was perhaps a suboptimal way of gathering data.

The first issue with this approach lies in the format it took. By asking the students to reflect dialogically on the themes of the course, I was hoping to spur discussion and thus reignite some of the dialectical tensions that occurred during the course itself. However, the fact that it was dialogical may have led to the students compromising their views to satisfy the demands of other members of the class. As the students were challenging each other within the context of the assignment itself, it seems plausible that they may have felt the need to hide or disguise some of the views they held, which, had the data been collected individually, they may have felt more comfortable to express. Unfortunately, such concealment of views would be very hard to identify, as it would be essentially indistinguishable from their views organically developing through the dialogue. In future projects, this could be avoided by first collecting data from the participants individually, and then through some more dialogic form of exchange. This would allow them to express their views in an uninhibited way, before the challenges of the other participants might cause them to reconsider and reassess their stance on these issues. In other projects, I would suggest that this could be done through individual interviews, followed by a focus group interview. However, in the spirit of bricolage, other researchers can decide what approach would work best for their own project.

A second potential issue involved in asking the students to dialogically reflect on the topics of the class is related to the diversity in the level of English fluency between the participants. As mentioned throughout this book, there were two Japanese participants in the class, and two Italian participants. While all of the students were skilled users of English, there was still some level of disparity between the English levels of the participants, with the two Italian students demonstrating a generally higher level of fluency and confidence in their use of the language. It may have been the case that this led to a level of linguistic imbalance between the students when it came to the dialogical project, in which those who were less linguistically secure may have given up on explaining nuance in their opinions, or may have refrained from questioning the views of those students who seemed more competent or confident in their use of the language. On the other hand, it was not stipulated that the students use English for their reflections. Although the final project was written in English, this does not indicate necessarily that English was the only language used during the period of dialogic reflection on which the final written report was based. As both Italian students were studying Japanese as exchange students, it is possible that Japanese was used to some extent in the discussions. One of the participants subsequently informed me that the discussions on which the report was based were conducted almost entirely in English, with Japanese and Italian used to discuss the instructions and to make plans. This is therefore a point I would think about carefully when implementing this project in the future.

A further potential issue is related to the time that had elapsed between the initial data collection and this final project. The project was set at the end of

the semester, and so there was no real gap between the data collected during the semester and the final project. As such, while I have been referring to this as an attempt at a more "longitudinal" form of data collection, it is an attempt that was somewhat constrained by the requirements of the course. This project could not have been conducted any later than it was, and as such it may still have been too close to the initial classroom discussions to really allow for the development of views to manifest. Despite this, I believe that the points raised earlier in this chapter show that even given the short time between initial intervention and final project, there is evidence of the framing of the students developing in new ways. Thus, while the timing of this project may not have been ideal, it was still effective in capturing the ongoing evolution of the students' views. Therefore, I consider this a minor issue. Nevertheless, it is certainly understandable that other researchers may wish to expand on this suggestion of collecting longitudinal forms of data. In other projects, the follow-up data collection could be conducted several weeks or months removed from the initial study, thus allowing more time for the framing of the participants to crystallize around a new set of understandings (or, more pessimistically, to revert to the initial master framing documented at the start of the research process). Other researchers may also choose to conduct more than one of these follow-up studies to analyse how the views change over time, and perhaps gather some insight into what thought processes or experiences influence the redrawing of the frame in one way or another. Naturally, a research project must have boundaries, and while the views of participants may continue to develop, our documentation of them must, at some point, come to an end. Each researcher must decide when it is necessary to draw the line in their own project.

The issues outlined above demonstrate that the example of frame analysis presented in this book is only one way in which a project can be carried out using the approach. What works in one setting may not work in another, and it is the responsibility of each researcher to make informed decisions about what will work in their own research project. As qualitative researchers, we should not be beholden to canonical methods but, in the spirit of bricolage, make informed judgments about how to use the theoretical and methodological tools in our toolbox to address the specifics of each research context (Denzin, 2010).

Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I suggested that researchers using the type of frame analysis approach put forward by this book must be careful not to assume that their interventions will determine the final outcomes regarding the beliefs and values of participants. When we understand that our research participants are intelligent, thoughtful, and creative people, we must also acknowledge that their beliefs will change and evolve over time. To take examples of counter-framing that emerge in the moment a contradiction is

raised as definitive would be to ignore this complexity, and to rob the participants of some of their agency. It would also serve to freeze them in a single moment of negotiation and deliberation, and thus potentially misrepresent the ongoing development of their thought. As such, I suggested that researchers should attempt to engage in some longitudinal form of data collection following the conclusion of the main period in which the intervention is carried out. The goal of doing so is to see how time and distance from the interactions may have allowed the thoughts of the participants to mature and develop, as well as to highlight the intricacy of the process, and not to overstate the impact of the researcher's interventions.

To illustrate this, I provided some data from my own attempt at implementing a kind of "check-in" with the student-participants in my study, in the form of a final assignment which they were given several weeks following the course to work on. Admittedly, this is not perhaps as "longitudinal" as might be ideal, but it did provide the students with some space from the course to reflect and discuss their ideas before putting them down on paper. It was also the most realistic way of carrying out this data collection, given the constraints of the study.

Through this final, dialogically structured, written assignment, it was possible to see an evolution in the views of the participants. The new shared framing that they presented in this piece of work comprised four key discourses. The first of these was the belief that ELF, and related issues such as translanguaging, are positive and empowering ideas, both because they may allow users of English to gain confidence in their language skills, and because they may allow people to appropriate the language to develop and express their own unique identities. This was a discourse that remained relatively unchanged from the start of the course, although it was given new labels taken from the course they were studying. Secondly, the students appeared to acknowledge the contradiction between their initial conception of English as a common resource with their recognition that it is still seen as a form of private property belonging to inner circle countries. Thirdly, they suggested that feelings of linguistic inferiority on behalf of some language learners, and the need to pass high-stakes exams, might limit English learners in the forms of the language they could realistically hope to study and use. Both the second and third of these discourses appeared to have emerged as a consequence of the discussions we had in class, and echoed some of the topics that were central to those discussions, as presented in Chapter 5. The final discourse was centred around the idea that inner-circle varieties of English and international forms and uses of English should co-exist, and that conditions should be established such that each individual user can decide which path they want to take when learning the language.

To me, this indicated a subtly altered frame from their initial master frame at the start of the course. While they continued to see ELF and related ideas as liberating ways in which people could take ownership of English and use it

for their own communicative or expressive purposes, they also acknowledged the difficulties of this situation currently being realized, and seemed to problematize some of the naïvety of their original master frame. As such, their final suggestion reads not simply as a description of the way the world is, or just a general statement of values, but rather as a prescription for a world that ought to be brought about. They hint at some ways this could be accomplished (through changing education and exam systems, through changing minds and attitudes), but stop short of concrete suggestions for social change. Still, it appears to me that this is an ideological shift, borne at least partially of the discussions we had in class, in which I attempted to foster counter-framing through pointing out apparent contradictions between their master frame, and their apparent recognition of the social realities in which they operate. Their framing, as evident in this final project, has shifted, and this signals a rupture in the ideology on which the framing is based.

As demonstrated in this chapter, implementing some form of longitudinal, post-intervention form of data collection can help to capture the ongoing development of thought among participants in a research project. This can help both to prevent a researcher from over- (or under-)representing the impact of their interventions, as well as to provide a fuller and more reflective account of the beliefs of the participants in the study. As with all the elements of the frame analysis approach put forward in this book, the way in which they may be implemented is left up to the individual researcher, keeping in mind the affordances and restrictions of their research context. Where possible and practical, however, collecting some form of data along these lines will help to provide a richer, more robust, and more honest account of the effects of the frame analysis approach.

Notes

1 This is an imperfect quote from Jenkins (2015, p. 60) discussing the work of García (2009).
2 It should also be noted that it is problematic to suggest that such "official" recognition from inner circle authorities is required to confer validity on these varieties. They ought to be (in my view) legitimate owing to the role they play within the communities that produced them.

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7

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The goal of this book was to outline an approach to qualitative research inspired by the early critical theory of Max Horkheimer. I have referred to this approach as *frame analysis*, owing to the influence of concepts around the idea of framing adapted from the work of social movement scholars such as Snow (2004), Snow and Benford (1988; 1992; 2000), Noakes and Johnston (2005), and Johnston (1995), as well as from work on racial framing and counter framing by Feagin (2013). This is a qualitative research method which, following writers such as Denzin (2010) and Kincheloe et al. (2017), I have termed a "bricolage," made up as it is of various principles and practices related to an assortment of schools of qualitative research and social theory. After setting out the principles and practices associated with frame analysis, I spent three chapters illustrating the methodology though data collected as part of a small-scale classroom study at a Japanese university. In this concluding chapter I will briefly review the main points of the theoretical framework, and the findings of the small sample study that was conducted to exemplify the framework in practice. Following this, some remaining questions will be addressed, focusing specifically on the reproduction of ideology, as well as potential concerns about difficulties that may be faced when this kind of research method is attempted in a non-classroom-based context. I will then outline some of the pitfalls that researchers interested in carrying out this kind of research would be advised to avoid and suggest some ways in which they may be able to do this. Finally, I will provide some concluding remarks about the significance and impact of small-scale critical qualitative research in the present moment.

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Review of framework and findings

In Chapter 2, I laid out the key elements of Max Horkheimer's early critical theory, with a focus on those parts that are most relevant to my project. I suggested that critical research inspired by such a theory should have the goal of creating the conditions in which people can live unalienated lives focused on activities designed to bring about meaningful self-development. One obstacle to achieving such an outcome is the dominant ideology to which people subscribe, which is defined as the sets of beliefs which normalize and reproduce the status quo, at the expense of the interests of the majority. Ideology can be identified through immanent critique, in which a conception of society is contrasted with its reality, and the claims are then examined for the elements which bring about any tension or contradiction between these two. The ideology is thus revealed to have a false character (in whole or in part), and opportunities arise for people to transcend both the current social structure and the ideology which sustains it. The goal of this book was to outline and exemplify an approach to qualitative research which would focus on the uncovering of ideology through immanent critique.

Chapter 3 described an approach to research that I termed "frame analysis," borrowing and adapting ideas and terminology from social movement research, the work of Feagin (2013) on racial framing and counter-framing, and various approaches to qualitative research including critical ethnography, critical participatory action research, critical pedagogy, and critical discourse analysis. In a frame analysis project, the researcher begins by identifying what I term the "master frame" of the participants. This is the dominant set of consciously held and expressed beliefs which characterize their understanding of a particular social sphere or institution. The researcher then seeks examples of the participants expressing (either overtly or implicitly) an understanding of the true social and material conditions in which they live. If contradictions between the expressed values of the participants and the reality of the social world are revealed, these can be raised to a level of consciousness, thus opening up pathways for potential social change.

Following this, in Chapters 4–6, I explored the use of this method through discussion of a small-scale research project with students at a Japanese university. In these chapters I first identified the "master frame" of the students, which I suggested was constructed from a number of key discourses related to language, ownership, and human capital. The participants suggested that all Englishes are equal, that English is a common resource that can be adopted and adapted by individuals, and that most people learn English as an investment towards improving their social or economic status. The first two of these I identified as being representative of a social liberalism that values tolerance, diversity, and pluralism (Heywood, 2003), while the third appeared more influenced by neoliberal ideas related to language education as a way of building human capital (Becker, 1993).

I then looked for contradictions between these claimed beliefs and the tacit recognition by the participants of the social reality in which they lived. Following this, I attempted to bring these contradictions to a level of consciousness through highlighting and presenting them to the participants. The participants' responses to this prompting were varied, and ranged from what I have termed "frame maintenance," in which the participants essentially ignored the contradictions presented and continued to view issues through their initial frame, all the way to "counter-framing," in which the participants produced new frames that recognized the need to transcend the conditions of the world as it is in order for their values to be realized.

Rather than unproblematically seeing English as simply a tool that anyone can use to express themselves, with all Englishes being equal, the participants came to understand that there are numerous social and material barriers preventing this ideal from being actualized. They came to understand that there is a contradiction between the idea of English as a common resource, and English as a form of property owned by the cultures of inner circle (Kachru, 1985) nations (i.e., the "mother tongue–native speaker tradition," Hutton, 2010, p. 641). They further came to appreciate that certain social and educational structures may prevent people from truly using English in variable, experimental, and self-directed ways. In this, they seemed to recognize the limits of the ideology which had characterized their initial master-framing. However, this did not lead them to reject the idea that English should be a common resource, with each variety possessing equal validity to the rest (the path taken by Quirk, 1989; see also Bhatt, 2017). Instead, they suggested that what is most important is that people have the choice of which forms of English to engage with, and the option to either pursue the study of inner-circle forms of the language with a cultural element, or to focus on more ELF/translanguaging-informed approaches which aim more at communicative fluency and the development of an English unique to each individual or group, without any stigma being attached to this choice. In other words, rather than arguing for or against different varieties of English, they argued for the freedom of individuals to make these choices for themselves, and to remove, to as great a degree as practicable, the barriers that prevent people from making such choices. In doing so, they argued for a form of engagement with the language which would potentially avoid the danger of alienation in language use. Rather than forcing students to study inner-circle forms of the language, or insisting they focus their attention on communicative competence and communication strategies, the students suggested that as many options as possible should be open to language learners, and that they should have the freedom to choose those which best reflect their goals, desires, and wishes. This is, as far as it goes, a liberatory image of language education.

It may be objected that the new framing of the students does not fully transcend the essentially liberal values they began the course with. The new framing still valorizes the notion of individuals making choices about language learning and use, rather than anything more systemic or radical. The

vision that the students presented, of uninhibited individual freedom around language use, may appear unrealistic. Marxist writers have made it clear that humans create their world not individually, but relationally (Eagleton, 2016; Holt, 2015), and that as such human agency is always constrained in some sense by social structure, a point also made by writers such as Freud (1961), who had an influence on the development of Frankfurt School critical theory. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out, "man's self-production is always, and of necessity, a social enterprise" (p. 51). Jaeggi (2014) in her discussion of alienation is at pains to clarify that her conception of coming to self-realization means not just a detached individualism, but a process of "realizing oneself in the world in a self-determined way" (p. 209). As such, the ideal presented by the students may seem representative of a sort of romantic libertarianism that cannot be fully realized. I would tend to agree with these criticisms, but the point of this project was not to convert the participants to a particular way of thinking. Rather, it was to confront their ideals with their acknowledged social reality, so as to highlight antagonisms between the two, and thus provide a space in which they could work to transcend both. This, I believe, is what they did. This does not mean, however, that they arrived at a final, perfect, set of ideals or values (as if such a thing could even exist!). Rather, they traded in a somewhat naïve set of beliefs for one which is less idealist and more grounded in the social and material conditions in which language learning and use play out. Should this new set of ideas prove also to be inadequate, they may in turn be transcended. This is an ongoing dialectical process of negation, one which I hope will continue through further discussion and experience.

The vision of language learning which the participants articulated was one in which individuals can freely develop, unencumbered, to as great an extent as possible, by social or economic pressures. While the set of values expressed by the students in their final project may still be unrealistic, they have at least realized some of the constraints placed on the ways in which individuals and communities may engage with language. Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that institutions that emerge in response to historically specific economic or social conditions may, over time, become reified and appear to possess "a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact" (p. 58). Perhaps this experience will help the students to consider which institutions still make sense, and which require abolition or reform in order to allow greater freedom for individuals and communities around language use. At the very least, they may come to recognize ideological elements in their initial master framing, shown to be ideological because they are self-negating in practice.

Under the post-Marxist framework of early critical theory adopted in this book, ideology must operate to serve certain interests. It is not enough to show that beliefs are false; they must also be related to the operation of power and the maintenance of social domination by some groups of people over

others. While it is challenging to generalize from a small-scale qualitative study such as the one discussed in this book to much larger social processes, I will make some attempt here to provide just such a generalization, with the understanding that this is, and can only be, provisional and partial.

It appeared to me that the three discourses which comprised the master frame served to uphold the idea of English as a global language, and at the same time to legitimize the role it plays for the functioning of neoliberalism as a global economic system. The positive and seemingly unobjectionable values of diversity and pluralism which characterized the first two discourses appeared to mask the third more instrumental, competition-focused discourse surrounding human capital. The celebration of linguistic diversity on the part of the students also served to obscure the fact that accumulating human capital appears to rely, to some extent, on mastering certain forms of the language that are acceptable for the acquisition of credentials and qualifications, and for gaining employment opportunities in a globalized world. The necessity of learning English as a means of social and economic advancement therefore rubbed up against the idea that we are all equal in our use and appropriation of English. Clearly, we are not, and pretending that we are obscures the fact that for many people English education acts largely as a screening method to provide internationally mobile workers for global enterprise. This serves the interests of those involved in global business, and also the interests of English-speaking countries who benefit from the soft power that results from their language acting as the global standard. On a smaller scale, benefits also accrue to language teaching and testing organizations, who receive financial rewards for the services they provide, and are able to do so under the guise of an egalitarian mission of education and credentialling in which language learning is presented as a form of empowerment. Through the dialectical process of questioning that characterized the frame analysis approach, the participants came to recognize some elements of this dynamic, and to appreciate the need for something to change in order for their values of liberal diversity and pluralism to be actualized. Once again, this is very much a provisional and incomplete picture. It is not possible to create a thoroughgoing theory of ideology based on such a small sample. Nevertheless, I believe that this is a plausible interpretation which resonates with common ideas within the field of English language education.

I hope that the frame analysis approach can be one component in an iterative process of questioning that reveals how far the students' ideals lie from realization, and which slowly uncovers the borders of the paths which must be taken from here to there. Horkheimer suggested that the self-negating contradictions between bourgeois ideology and reality would lead to a transformation of both. In realizing the limits and internal tensions of their expressed ideology, the students may eventually help to transform it, and the reality it occludes, into something else entirely.

Remaining questions

A detailed attempt has been made in this book to show the frame analysis approach in practice, and thereby to illustrate and clarify the theoretical principles and practical procedures that inform and make up the approach. Despite this, there are still some questions and concerns which need to be addressed, and I have divided these into theoretical, practical, and ethical issues.

Theoretical questions

This study has attempted to provide a method by which a researcher can uncover and challenge dominant ideology through highlighting contradictions between the values espoused by the participants with regard to society or a particular social institution, and the actuality of how society or an institution functions. However, one point that has not been addressed regards the origin of ideology. Ideology, in the framework used here, is understood as a set of dominant ideas about how a society functions which serve to reproduce that society and all the inequalities it contains, and yet which are also unconsciously taken on by the members of that society, to most of whom they offer only disadvantage. This leaves open the question of how the mediation occurs of these ideas between society and the individual.

Within Marxist and post-Marxist social theory there are several explanations for how ideology may be inculcated in the minds of the population. For writers working from a theoretical position of structural Marxism such as Louis Althusser (2014), ideology is propagated by what he terms "ideological state apparatuses," which seek to dominate or pacify the working classes through covert and nonviolent means. These apparatuses can include schools, religious institutions, family structures, and other social or cultural institutions which may influence how people perceive and interpret the world around them. For the Frankfurt School writers, one way in which ideology is propagated is through what Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) term the "culture industry," which refers to popular culture which has become standardized, unchallenging, and has lost the radical or revolutionary potential which they felt was contained in many artworks. From a more discourse-level perspective, Holborow (2012) has described how the ideology of neoliberalism has been normalized through the use of market metaphors in everyday language, thereby extending the logic of the free market to other social spheres. Within the specific sphere of ELT, it has been suggested that neoliberal ideology is reproduced through the images and sentiments that can be found in textbooks (Bori, 2018; Gray, 2010; 2012; Gray & Block, 2014), and that the reproduction of dominant perspectives on teaching and learning can be at least partially blamed on the views expounded in teacher training programmes (Block & Gray, 2012; 2016; Lowe & Lawrence, 2018), as well as through the prominence of training and qualifications offered by Western institutions (Lowe, 2015).

These explanations for the spread of ideology all have a ring of truth to them, although they may not be fully satisfactory on their own. It is probably the case that the dissemination and reification of ideology takes place in a multitude of ways, in part through social institutions (although recognizing that such institutions can also be places in which dominant ideas may be challenged), in part through cultural hegemony, and in part through the shaping of discourses that serve to legitimize one privileged point of view over others. It is important to consider these questions, because identifying the ways in which ideology is socially mediated may allow us to stem its flow at the source, rather than attempting to divert its course after it has already carved deep grooves through the landscape of the human psyche. One criticism of the methodology described in this book may be that it is merely a palliative approach to tackling ideological misperceptions in individual cases, and is insufficient to make changes at scale. This is a reasonable point; however, as stated many times in this book, the methodology I am putting forward here is my own bricolage approach to critical qualitative research. Identifying broader trends would require a level of generalization that is not achievable through the study of individual cases, at least of the form discussed here. As such, I leave the question of how ideology is disseminated open, and this is a potential limitation of the frame analysis approach. Nevertheless, it may be the case that research in other contexts could provide more concrete ideas on this topic. For example, researchers studying a sample of mid-career teachers who had undergone the same teacher training programme could investigate how their teaching beliefs have been informed by their training, thus identifying a specific source of potentially ideological beliefs. This would allow for a more focused investigation into the dissemination of ideology than the current study, which contained a diverse set of participants from two different countries who had not gone through a shared, easily-identifiable set of experiences with regard to language education.

A second question which may be raised is a technical one related to the content of the critical theory from which I am drawing. In the work of Horkheimer, critical theory was developed from Marxism, and shared with Marx's work a focus on the role historical materialism plays in shaping the conditions in which people live and the ideas they hold (Abromeit, 2011; Held, 1980; Wiggershaus, 1994). In other words, the kind of critique suggested by Horkheimer can only be carried out when based on a fully developed material theory of society. The form a society takes will then influence the beliefs and values of those in society, forming a part of their "character structure" (it is at this point that the integration of psychoanalysis becomes apparent). Readers looking at the analysis in this book may feel that the frame analysis approach does not operate in quite the same way, as it could be used to conduct a critique of values in a way divorced from a more general theory of society, that is, as a form of moral or normative critique, perhaps closer to the work of the later critical theory of Habermas (Warnke, 1995).

This is, I admit, a fair criticism. I have attempted to keep my own analysis grounded in a theory of modern society by relating it to the writing in political economy around liberalism and neoliberalism. I have tried to show how ideas related to these connected philosophies were reproduced in the framing of students, and how these could be shown to be ideological through examining the emergence of contradictions between their master framing and their experience of social reality. In assessing the gap between beliefs as expressed in framing, and social reality as experienced, the ideological character of these beliefs emerges. In focusing the analysis on the rift between framing and reality, I have attempted to ground the analysis firmly in social facts, materialism, and material relations. I have also limited my discussion to the manifestation of these ideological elements within one narrow professional sphere, that of language education. As such, a criticism could be made that a key part of Horkheimer's early critical theory is not fully realized in the frame analysis approach. I have attempted to pre-empt such criticism in earlier chapters by suggesting my work is inspired by elements of Horkheimer's thought, rather than fully adhering to it. However, this is perhaps practising sleight of hand. It would be more true to say that in attempting to juggle the different theoretical concepts that have gone into the development of this methodological qualitative bricolage, I have had to make decisions about which theorical and practical points to lend more or less weight. In this case, the idea of critical theory as applying to a fully realized material critique of society has given way to the more reflexive form of data collection desirable in qualitative research. The views expressed by my participants did not fall neatly along the lines of established political ideologies (and nor should we expect them to, given that people are complex and continually developing beings), and this was reflected in my analysis. Nevertheless, I attempted to relate the findings to a material theory of society, even if it was perhaps one which was not fully developed.

Practical questions

I will now turn my attention to questions that may be raised with regard to practical elements of the methodology. In the study presented in this book, I was in the dual position of teacher and researcher. This meant I had quite a lot of opportunity to raise contradictions with the participants, as (curriculum goals aside) I was quite free to use the class time in whatever way I wanted. I have suggested that frame analysis could be used by qualitative researchers in any kind of fieldwork project, but it is unlikely that other kinds of ethnographic or case study research would afford so many opportunities to foster counter-framing. Nor is it likely that the researcher will hold a position of authority within the setting which might allow them to create the circumstances in which these kinds of issues would be considered. In response to these possible objections, I would suggest that the raising of contradictions

could take place through something akin to focus group interviews, in which participants are gathered together to be interviewed at once so as to generate polyvocal accounts related to issues in the research setting. By carrying out focus group interviews with the same participants at various intervals during the project, it may be possible to track the evolution of views and bring up new issues for consideration. While there may be some practical challenges with regularly bringing together a group of people for interviews like this, especially given focus group interviews are usually quite lengthy (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), it is one possible way in which the discussion of contradictions could be carried out in other projects.

The question of researcher authority is also an interesting one. It may be the case that a researcher would find it more difficult to get the participants to engage with the questions raised by the researcher if the researcher lacked the authority of the teacher, as was the case in this study. However, it is also possible that this would lead to stronger conclusions, as the researcher may feel more confident that their position as an authority is not leading the participants to agree with them at times they otherwise may not have. One concern of the study presented here (addressed in previous chapters) is that the participants might have been saying what they felt the researcher wanted them to say. While this is a common problem in qualitative research, it is even more pronounced when the researcher is in a position of authority and power over their research participants and is actively trying to get them to reconsider their views. While I attempted to mitigate this imbalance to as great an extent as possible, it is a concern that is more heightened in the case described in this book than in other projects. Thus, while the lack of researcher authority could be seen as a disadvantage in terms of carrying out the research, it could also be seen as an advantage in the sense that the conclusions might gain validity and legitimacy.

Ethical questions

Finally, some may question the legitimacy of a research method which aims at changing the context that is being researched (see Hammersley, 2007). There are two questions associated with this: (1) what right does the researcher have to try and enact change in a research setting?; and (2) doesn't a transformative approach to research necessarily distort the object being researched? I will briefly address each of these.

On the first point, I have attempted to show how a researcher using the frame analysis approach is conducting an immanent critique. They are not bringing in information from outside the research setting and attempting to use that information to influence the context they are studying. Rather, they are documenting and highlighting apparent contradictions within the research setting itself. By admitting the researcher into the context, the participants have already given their consent for things in the setting to be

documented, and for conclusions to be drawn about them. It seems therefore entirely reasonable that these conclusions be presented to the participants for consideration, and for their reactions also to be documented. The form the reactions take are up to the participants. The researcher's ethical duty then becomes how to document and present these to a readership with as great an amount of fidelity as possible. Block (2018, p. 173) notes that critical researchers often present their findings, interpretations, and suggestions to their research participants at the end of the research process with the hope (if perhaps not the expectation) that they will take these findings on board and act based on what they have learned. The frame analysis approach simply folds this dynamic into the research process itself, and makes the presentation of findings and the reactions of participants an element in the collection of data.

As to whether this kind of approach necessarily distorts the setting, this is a question of degree, not of kind. All qualitative research influences the subjects of the research to some degree. At the most basic level, this can be seen in the "observer's paradox" wherein the act of observing something changes the thing being observed (Mirhosseini, 2020). More concretely, the researcher will always influence the setting in some way, whether they intend to or not. By observing from the corner of a room, they may make their participants self-conscious and therefore cause them to change their behaviour. By asking a follow-up question in an interview, they may cause their participants to rethink their answer and thus change their mind. By requesting permission to see a sensitive internal document, they may cause such documents to be written in a less honest and revealing way in the future. We cannot avoid influencing our research settings, but we certainly ought to avoid manipulation and harm in the course of our research. This book has attempted to make the case for a research method that is neither manipulative nor harmful. Indeed, my hope is that the frame analysis approach will lead to opportunities for positive change, based on dialogue and collaboration between researchers and participants. It is my sincere hope that such a vision can be realized.

This book is the culmination of my efforts to develop a qualitative approach to research that integrates early critical theory, frame analysis, and interventionist and participatory approaches to qualitative research. However, as demonstrated above, I have not been able to answer every question this raises, and I hope that others will be able to develop their own variants of the approach which will answer some of these questions. I have been clear throughout that what is presented here is my own bricolage approach to research, and thus that it should not be taken as a fixed or settled method. Rather, I encourage people to add to and develop it in their own way, keeping in mind the principles and practices outlined here. Perhaps others may succeed in integrating the elements of the approach more satisfactorily than I have.

Pitfalls to avoid

With a form of qualitative research such as the frame analysis approach, there are certain dangers that should be avoided. These dangers emerge because of the avowed transformative goals of the project. The researcher enters the field with the intention of engaging in some kind of intervention and the hope that this intervention will lead eventually to some kind of progressive change. Naturally, this heightens questions about potential bias on the part of the researcher, and the possibility of the researcher twisting data in order to fit their agenda. As I am putting forward the frame analysis approach as a methodology for others to potentially follow, I think it is important to address some of these concerns, and provide some guardrails that may prevent researchers from becoming overzealous either in their attempts to encourage counter-framing or in the claims they make about the success of their project.

The frame analysis approach is one that combines research with a form of activism, and so there is a clear danger that the latter may overwhelm the former. Indeed, it may well be the case that a researcher is more concerned with enacting change than with documenting what is happening around them. In such a case, it is possible, even likely, that their research would become victim to their activism. It is therefore essential that anyone engaging in this type of research recognizes that both elements must be balanced, with neither subjugated to the other. We must produce research reports that reflect, with as great a level of fidelity as possible, what has been observed in the research setting. Conversely, we must make sure that we do not fall back into simply observing what is happening while making no effort towards effecting change. This can be done, of course, but then it would be a different type of project altogether.

On a related point, researchers must be wary of reading the data in a way that exaggerates the impact of their interventions. As already mentioned, most researchers who elect to carry out this kind of project will start with some kind of agenda in mind. This is almost unavoidable. There may be a situation of injustice they want to remedy or a set of beliefs they are hoping that their participants will come around to. Starting from this kind of position should not disqualify a researcher from carrying out the study. Indeed, we may be more suspicious of a researcher who claims complete neutrality, as such a claim could well be (by either accident or design) a way of disguising their true intentions while affecting a pretence of uninvolved distance. However, while it is difficult for a researcher to put aside their biases completely, the presence of these biases is something that they should be aware of, and work to minimize in their gathering of data. The first reason for this is that the researcher may be tempted to massage the data to say what they want it to say. It is understandable that a researcher would want to believe that their interventions were successful in achieving the results they desired, and that the participants came around to a way of thinking that they view as more

conducive to positive social change. However, this cannot be guaranteed, and the researcher should respect the autonomy of their participants to react to the interventions in the way they naturally would. Of course, the researcher is intending to influence the research setting—we cannot pretend to be putting aside our biases and becoming neutral, objective observers. However, the researcher still has an obligation to report their interpretations of what occurred honestly and accurately.

There are several ways a researcher can attempt to avoid being overwhelmed by their biases. One way of doing this is though familiar processes of bracketing and triangulation. In the former, the researcher should utilize a reflective self-awareness to set aside their beliefs to as great a degree as possible (see Tufford & Newman, 2012), while in the latter the researcher can cross-reference findings between different forms of data in order to increase the validity of their conclusions (Davis, 1995; Mirhosseini, 2020). Another approach to avoiding overestimating the impact of researcher interventions in this kind of project is, as suggested in Chapter 6, a more longitudinal process of data collection. This would allow the researcher to check the evolution of framing over time, and see how lasting any impact of their work with the participants might turn out to be. Finally, researchers should look at their finished research report with a sceptical eye. Does the final picture look a little too neat? Are the loose ends tied up a little too cleanly? Given the messiness of qualitative research, and especially the unpredictable nature of the kind of approach outlined in this book, caution should be exercised when a final report feels a little too good to be true. This does not mean that researchers should present their work in an undisciplined, chaotic way. Research reports are always, to some degree, selective, and tend to focus on salient themes rather than attempting to represent the full, undiluted reality. Researchers must decide on the boundaries of their work, which will mean prizing some data over others. This is simply a reality of trying to represent the complexity of a setting as a coherent text. Nevertheless, we must look at our reports reflexively and make sure that our representations of data have not been too selective in excluding the messiness and unpredictability that the real world so reliably exhibits. If everything seems a little too in order, researchers should question whether their report has represented the data accurately, or whether they have been perhaps too selective in searching for the parts of the data that support what they want to conclude.

The researcher must also be careful not to cast themselves in the role of the hero. The participants are not helpless dupes who need to be enlightened by the researcher, and the researcher is not endowed with greater insight than the participants (at least, not necessarily so). Rather than taking an attitude of heroism or saviourism, the researcher must adopt an attitude of respect and approach their participants with something close to what Freire (2005), drawing on the work of the early Frankfurt School compatriot Erich Fromm, called "radical love" (see Kohan, 2021). That is, they must meet them in the

field as equals, adopt a position of humility, and view the project as something akin to a collaboration through dialogue and discussion. Uniting this idea with the previous point, one method of developing this relationship of trust is to engage in member checking. This refers to the process whereby the researcher shares their findings and interpretations with the participants in the study to see if they feel that this reflects their understanding and experience of the situation (Brown, 2004). This does not imply that the researcher must subjugate their interpretations to those of their participants. Indeed, as Graeber (2004) has stated, when engaging in an ethnography (and other similar forms of qualitative research), the researcher

> observes what people do, and then tries to tease out the hidden symbolic, moral, or pragmatic logics that underlie their actions; one tries to get at the way people's habits and actions makes sense in ways that they are not themselves completely aware of.
>
> *(p. 12)*

The final part of this is key, as the framing of participants is reflective of ideas absorbed from the larger culture in which they live, and the significance of which may not be immediately apparent to them. Nevertheless, by engaging in member-checking a researcher can help to keep themselves, their research, and their interpretations grounded.

Another reason that it is important to bracket some of your biases when entering the field is that participants will probably be able to sense when a researcher is attempting to push a particular point of view, and this may cause them to become defensive. The researcher must, of course, be honest in their intent to be provocative, and (as in the case of the study discussed in this book) their interventions may be so obvious that participants could not be under any realistic illusion about their point of view or agenda. However, there is certainly a risk that an overzealous approach may cause the participants to feel patronised or manipulated, causing them to become uncooperative and less forthcoming in their beliefs. In the end, this will become a question of the skill of the researcher in managing field relations.

It would be naïve to think that a researcher carrying out this kind of project can realistically claim that they have entered the field with no agenda or biases, but as researchers we have a responsibility to manage these biases. This does not mean attempting to discard them altogether, nor does it mean engaging in self-indulgent "narcissistic reflexivity" (Bourdieu, 2024). In the first place, discarding all biases is probably not possible, and moreover the kind of research approach outlined in this book is one in which the biases of the researcher are seen as a productive force in the process. It is also important, however, that the researcher not turn the analytic lens too strongly on themselves, at the expense of the object of investigation. Bias must be recognized and acknowledged, but not mistaken for the focus of study. The

researcher, must be wary of their biases leading them astray in both the collection and reporting of data.

Extending frame analysis beyond ELT

In this book I have focused on the specific context of English language teaching in my discussion of frame analysis. This has been for two reasons: firstly, I am an ELT professional, and this is the field with which I am most familiar; and secondly, I developed the frame analysis methodology in the context of ELT. As such, this book, and the presentation of frame analysis it contains, has focused on English language teaching. However, there is nothing in the approach that limits it only to this narrow field of education. Indeed, there is nothing stopping frame analysis from being applied to any other situation in which a qualitative approach is taken to research. I hope that people in other fields may see the value in this approach for their own area of research and study. For example, this approach may be used to investigate ideologies in fields such as English for tourism, contrasting the models that students are expected to use with the English spoken by the people they are most likely to be working with. It might also be interesting to use the frame analysis approach in areas such as translation, where the demands of the market may inhibit translators from producing texts that are reflective of their artistic or linguistic sensibilities. These are only speculations, however, and would need to be tested in practice.

It may be the case that in applying the approach more broadly, new tools and ideas are added to the bricolage, thus helping to develop a more contextually appropriate form of the method that is suitable for the specific project planned by the researcher. In fact, I would suggest that in using the method in other fields, a new link may be formed with the initial programme of research of the Frankfurt School. The early critical theory of Horkheimer was intended to integrate the results of various fields of research into the development of an ongoing, dialectically mediated, critical model of society. This interdisciplinary element of critical theory was not fully realized at the time, but in applying the frame analysis approach to various other fields, and perhaps comparing framing practices across these studies, it may be possible to bring a shade of what Horkheimer originally intended into our work. Qualitative research cannot be used by itself to build a full social theory, being necessarily concerned only with specific cases and contexts. However, the development of resonances between studies carried out in different fields may at least provide an inspiration or impetus for more general theoretical work.

What does it matter?

The world continues to face seemingly insurmountable challenges. The looming climate catastrophe, the rising tide of right-wing populism around

the globe, and the reemergent possibility of nuclear annihilation all make it difficult to imagine that a better world is truly possible. Readers may be approaching the end of this book and justifiably wondering whether such small-scale critical research really has a place at all in this struggle. What can critical researchers, even those engaged in direct intervention in their research settings, do to impact these huge challenges? Is there any hope that such work can make a serious difference?

To answer this question, perhaps it is worth turning back to the Frankfurt School. The members of the Institute for Social Research were German Marxists, many of whom were of Jewish descent, and as the Nazis came to power, they found themselves persecuted, stripped of their teaching licences, and dispossessed of their family's property (Abromeit, 2011; Jay, 1973; Müller-Doohm, 2005; Wheatland, 2009; Wiggershaus, 1994). They were eventually forced to flee their native Germany, first to Switzerland, and then to the United States, where they found a home at Columbia University. In America, they did not give up their research programme, but instead poured extra effort into studying and understanding the attitudes that had allowed authoritarianism to become so dominant and normalized in their homeland. This was a project pursued in a number of ground-breaking publications, including the famous texts *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950) and *Prophets of Deceit* (Löwenthal & Guterman, 2017). Faced with hopelessness, they resisted, and used their academic expertise to contribute to our understanding of fascism and authoritarianism, as well as developing insights that have informed thought on the topic of social domination and resistance more broadly. The fascist nightmare passed, but the institute's work remains. We are yet to see if the current moment will also fade, but until it has, we are tasked with the same duty of resistance.

In the spring of 1956, Adorno and Horkheimer began work on a new project. This was supposed to be a kind of updated version of the Communist Manifesto. While it never came to fruition, a record of their discussions was preserved, and in those notes we can find Horkheimer supplying a dictum for our own frightening and uncertain times (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2019, p. 31). "I do not believe that things will turn out well," Horkheimer remarked, "but the idea that they might is of decisive importance."

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APPENDIX A: COURSE OUTLINE

Lesson 1: Course introduction
Lesson 2: Defining the 'native speaker'
Lesson 3: Native-speakerism
Lesson 4: Redefining native-speakerism
Lesson 5: English as a lingua franca: Histories of international Englishes
Lesson 6: ELF skills 1: Pronunciation and lexicogrammar
Lesson 7: Students present their own activities
Lesson 8: ELF skills 2: Accommodation strategies
Lesson 9: Students present their own activities
Lesson 10: ELF skills 3: Intercultural skills
Lesson 11: Students present their own activities
Lesson 12: ELF skills 4: Multilingualism
Lesson 13: ELF skills 5: Translanguaging
Lesson 14: Students present their own activities.
Lesson 15: Criticisms of ELF

APPENDIX B: LIST OF INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please write a short narrative of your experiences studying English. Please explain why you became interested in studying the language, when and how you studied it, and what your goals are in terms of English study (e.g. to enjoy literature, to find a job, to communicate with friends or family, etc.)
2. What benefits can people get from learning languages? What motivates people to learn languages?
3. What do you think is the purpose of learning English for most people?
4. Do people learn other languages for the same reasons as English? If not, why? What reasons do people have for studying other languages?
5. Do you believe that it is necessary for people to study specific varieties of English? Why might people choose to study one variety of English over another?
6. Do you believe any varieties of English are more legitimate than others? Why or why not?
7. Do you believe any varieties of English are more valuable than others? Why or why not?
8. Have you ever felt any special pressure to change or "work on" a specific aspect of your English (e.g., your pronunciation, accent, formality, etc.?) If so, what was the cause or reason for this?

APPENDIX C: ACTIVITY PLAN TEMPLATE

Teacher:	*Class size:*	*Activity length:*
Activity Topic:		
Activity objectives: The goal of the activity is…. Activity materials:		
Time and materials	Procedures	

APPENDIX D: FINAL ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION

Final assignment

For your final assignment, you should work together as a group to write a dialogic reflection on the topics we have studied in this course. The final paper should read as a dialogue between all students, and should contain each student's opinion and perspective on the topics discussed. In your dialogue, please address the following questions.

Themes

1. The historical and theoretical development of English as a lingua franca and related concepts such as translanguaging.
2. The relevance of language, and of English as a lingua franca, to people's identities.
3. Whether it is possible for English as a lingua franca to be used in our current society.
4. Whether it is a good idea for English as a lingua franca to be taught in schools, or whether schools should continue to focus on inner-circle varieties of English. Will ELF help students to communicate in the future? Will it help them to get jobs? Will it be useful for students taking university entrance exams?
5. Related to 4: How could ELF become accepted more widely? What might need to change for this to happen? Are these things that should happen?

Procedures

First, meet to discuss these topics two or three times (it would be helpful to record your discussions). Next, work together to summarize your main points. Finally, write a semi-fictional dialogue between the four of you which showcases these points.

Write in Times New Roman font, size 1.5, single spacing, normal margins. The final report should reflect the size of the class. For each class member, there should be 1.5 pages of written text. Make sure to reference relevant literature to support your points. Please submit this by email to your teacher on 4 August.

APPENDIX E: REFLECTION FORM

_____'S ACTIVITY

What were the good points in this activity?

1.

2.

3.

How could this activity be improved or done differently? Why?

1.

2.

3.

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