**Whom to group with**
—A Bourdieusian Narrative Analysis of International Students in an Australian University

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**Context of the problem**

- **International Students**
  - Coming from affluent Asian countries
  - Using English as an additional language (EAL)
  - Australian higher education
  - English-medium education
  - Diversity in student populations

- **The problem**
  - Students’ insufficient English proficiency
  - Incompatible cultural attributes in Western education

**Literature review**

- **Group work**
  - 2-6 members
  - Graduate capability

- **Concerns**
  - Logistics (Burgett, 2003; Pitt, 2000)
  - Silent participation (Remedios, et al, 2008)
  - Unfair assessment results (Strass & Alice, 2009)
  - English vs knowledge transmission (Doherty, et al, 2011)
  - Contentions over use of English among Cantonese-speaking secondary students in Canada (Goldstein, 2003)

- **What is the gap?**

**Theoretical framework**

- **Rationale**
  - Educational relations
  - Considerations behind strategies

- **Bourdieu’s sociology**
  - Field: social relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)
  - Feel for the game
  - Social sub-fields: nested and adjacent (Luke, 2008)
  - Capital: relational leverages (Bourdieu, 1986)
    - Cultural capital
      - Cultural goods (Bourdieu, 1986)
      - School-related resources (Lareau & Weininger, 2003)
      - Spatial/participation competences (Curry, 2008)
    - Social capital
      - Opportunity to speak with English-speaking peers/powerful others (Norton, 2000; Milier, 2003)

- **Group work as a field of relations/exchange**

**The study**

- **Interview study**
  - Three semi-structured interviews
  - Email exchanges
  - Two semesters, Feb-Dec, 2008
  - 17 participants from 9 countries
  - English/Mandarin Chinese

**Narrative structure**

- **Orientation**
  - What/when/where/whom

- **Complication**
  - What went wrong

- **Evaluation**
  - Comments on feelings of events

- **Resolution**
  - Action/strategy
  - Result/outcome

- **Coda**
  - Lessons learned (Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997)

Helpful in identifying Patterns of
1. what went wrong
2. actions taken
3. reasons behind
Pedagogical intervention
■ Grouping with compatriots

Analysis

Learning interventions

Siti (Interview 1, English language)
*... know each other [compatriots] very well so we can give our full cooperation..."
- "but since we chose similar titles, so the group"
- "we don't know how they [Australians] study, how they work in a group"
- "but since we chose similar titles, so the lecturers give us the group"

Fatimah (Interviews 1-2, English language)
- Grouping with compatriots
- "Whenever we go there is the seat for us"

Evaluation 1: Sometimes it's good but sometimes we should mix with others because you're in a new country and it's best to meet new people... But sometimes it's good to be in our own group because we understand us and they (my compatriot cohort) accept us for who we are now.
- Resolution 1: And then right now, I tend to mix up with Australians, other students... Because I think in order to talk to other Australians maybe it's quite good to practice first in tutorials, because in a small group I tend to have more courage to speak. So if I sit with Australians maybe sometimes I work so I have more opportunity to talk well, to practice speaking...
- Evaluation 2: So when I'm sitting with my ((compatriot)) cohort I don't have the opportunity to talk to Australians.
- Resolution 2: So if I sit with Australians maybe sometimes we have pair work so I have more opportunity to talk with them... it's a good practice to talk English...

Fatimah (Interviews 1-2, English language)
- Pedagogical intervention
- Seeking to belong

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Fatimah (Interviews 1-2, English language)
- Pedagogical intervention
- Seeking to accrue capital

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References