From 1996 to 1998, I was a doctoral student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education (then called LANE) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Dr. Ted Aoki was Adjunct Professor at UBC and the organizer for the department colloquia. I worked as his assistant. The colloquium usually started from noon with a light lunch, followed by a speech offered by scholars from various disciplines for about one hour. The speakers were mainly from UBC, but sometimes we did get speakers from different parts of the world.

Dr. Aoki organized eleven colloquia during the two years. For example, in 1996-1997 we had a theme of “In the Midst of Disciplinarity/Interdisciplinarity” and we invited five famous scholars, such as Dr. Derek Gregory from the Department of Geography, formerly of Cambridge University, UK, and Dr. Bonny Norton from LLED. Dr. Gregory spoke about “Sly Spatiality,” and Dr. Norton spoke about “Reconceptualizing the Language Learner.” In 1997-1998, our theme was “Language, Education and Research: Mastering Signifiers a-Trembling.” We had a variety of topics such as “Performing Language in Research: Fifty Ways of Listening to Light” by Dr. Carl Leggo, a UBC professor and well-known poet. We also invited Dr. Alistair Pennycook from the University of Melbourne, Australia to talk about “Rethinking Language and Power in the Global Context.” I was fortunate to attend all eleven colloquia.

Dr. Aoki’s job was to invite speakers, write ads, and comment on the presentation immediately following each colloquium. One of my jobs was to type his ads, make posters, and distribute them. I found that Dr. Aoki’s
handwriting was impossible to read. Sometimes I asked friends and colleagues in the department for help, and quite often I had to call Dr. Aoki at home after I had exhausted my assistance. Dr. Aoki would always patiently clarify for me. At that time I had just started my doctoral studies (my MA was in English Literature) and there were many terms that were new to me. For example, I had a hard time understanding the meanings of “discourse,” “sly spatiality” (see appendix I), “Foucault” (see appendix II) and “epistemology” (see appendix III), not to mention that Dr. Aoki is difficult to read anyway. Dr. Aoki often used examples to explain these terms to me. He encouraged me to read widely and critically.

I found that Dr. Aoki is a serious scholar. He always checked my printed posters before I sent them away. Sometimes he kept revising the ad and I secretly complained, “Oh, not again!” We often had to go through several drafts until he was satisfied.

I enjoyed his introduction of the speaker at the beginning of each presentation. His introduction was brief and often made people laugh. At the end of each presentation, he always gave a brief summary and offered some provoking comments and questions for the audience to think about. Perhaps those who attended Dr. Leggo’s presentation still remember the lively conversation between Dr. Aoki and Dr. Leggo, and Dr. Leggo’s unique dancing in response to Dr. Aoki’s comments at the end of his presentation.

Even though I did not take any courses from Dr. Aoki, his thoughts broadened my visions. Born and raised in the People’s Republic of China, I began to learn English when I was thirteen, and later I taught English in a Chinese university. I recently completed my doctorate in Language and Literacy Education at UBC. In the last ten years or so, I have been struggling to find a place and a voice in English speaking academia. Dr. Aoki’s theory of spatiality offered me comfort, peace, and confidence. I began to see my otherness as an asset, not a liability. I am proud to be a citizen of between-the-worlds. Once, a friend of mine asked me: “Yan, are you a Chinese or Canadian?” With a nice smile, I answered: “I am Yan.”

Appendix I

Brownbag
Sly Spatiality

Wednesday, January 15

12:00-1:30 pm

(Complimentary lunch will be served at 12:00, followed by the colloquium: 12:30 - 1:30)
Language Education Research Center (LERC)
Ponderosa’F”, Room 103 (Main Floor)

• “Geography... has always been a thoroughly practical and deeply politicized discourse.” (p. 8)

• “Discourse is not an unproblematic reflection of the world but is instead an intervention in the world.” (p. 8)

Dr. Gregory writes, “when I left Cambridge in 1989, I had in my baggage the manuscript which I had called The Geographic Imagination. I threw it away at the end of the first term (at UBC) and replaced it with Geographic Imaginations (1994).” In this book, he announced that he is more interested in the language of geography than in the discipline of geography, particularly “popular geography” — the routine way we make sense of SPACES—so significant in our social lives.

In this presentation, he refers to Homi Bhabha’s ‘Sly Civility’ as he speaks of the doubled discourses of ‘Sly Spatiality.”

The colloquium is sponsored by the Department of Language Education (LANE) and will be chaired by Dr. Ted Aoki, Adjunct Professor. Everyone Welcome.

Appendix II
LANE Brownbag Colloquium

Rethinking Language and Power in the Global Context

featuring

Dr. Alastair Pennycook


he has lived and worked in various countries (England, Germany, Japan, China, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia) and has published on a wide range of issues (plagiarism, colonialism, autonomy in language teaching, language rights, the global spread of English, critical applied linguistics)

Wednesday, March 11
12:00-1:30 pm

(Complimentary lunch will be served at 12:00, followed by the colloquium: 12:30 - 1:30 )
Language Education Research Center (LERC) Ponderosa ‘F’, Room 103 (Main Floor)

This talk will revisit questions of language and power in the context of the global spread of English. It will explore different ways in which a connection between language and power can be made, depending very much on whose version of power—Marx, Bourdieu, Foucault, others—and whose version of language is used. This talk is aimed to stimulate discussion on how we can go about relating these two 'fundamental' concepts.

Everyone welcome.

The colloquium is sponsored by the Department of Language Education (LANE).
Appendix III

LANE Brownbag Colloquium

Languages of The Atlantic and The Pacific

featuring

Dr. Richard Cavell
Associate Professor, Chair of Canadian Studies,
Department of English Literature, U.B.C.

Wednesday, November 20

12:00-1:30 pm

(Lunch will be served at 12:00 noon)
Language Education Research Center (LERC)
Ponderosa ‘F’; Room 103 (Main Floor)

This Colloquium Session will feature Dr. Richard Cavell who has been involved with LANE’s Ritsumeikan Project. Dr. Cavell promises to take us into the space of difference between the language of the Atlantic and the language of the Pacific. In doing so, he will interface his talk with the soon-to-be-published article, “The Race of Space”, which deals with the signification of Monster Homes in Vancouver as he asks, ‘How does space get raced?’ ‘How does monstrosity emerge as a sign of race?’ ‘What is the epistemology of the monster house?’ We urge you to read “The Race of Space” prior to the session. It is available in LERC (Ponderosa ‘F’)

http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v08n02/aoki/guo.html (5 of 6) [12/31/2003 6:26:26 PM]
The colloquium is sponsored by the Department of Language Education (LANE) and will be chaired by Dr. Ted Aoki, Adjunct Professor.

About the Author

Yan Guo is an adjunct professor/lecturer of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Her research interest include intercultural communication, minority parent involvement, second language acquisition and identity, second language writing, discourse analysis, language training program review and assessment, and content-based ESL teaching. Her paper titled Rethinking Issues and Perspectives of Minority Parent Involvement will appear in the Conference Proceedings of the Western Canadian Association for Student Teaching (WestCAST) 2004. She has recently completed a chapter titled Between the Worlds: Searching for a Competent Voice, which will appear in G. Li & G. Beckett (Eds.), ‘Strangers”of the Academy: Trials and Triumphs of Asian Female Scholars in Higher Education (2005, Stylus). Inspired by Dr. Ted Aoki’s notion of spatiality, she has been searching for “a richer repertoire of pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural knowledge that only between-the-worlds residents are privy to” (Li, 1999).

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