CONTACT

August 2019

What's in an English name for students?
Plurilingualism for teaching vocabulary
Plus towards a pedagogy for Reconciliation and more

TESL Ontario

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Johnson, G. Fingerprint Worldmap [Image].
Retrieved from https://pixabay.com/vectors/
fingerprint-world-map-swirls-2750393/

Calendar

September 12–14	Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching (PSLLT), Northern Arizona University, Arizona, USA. https://psllt2019nau.wordpress.com/
September 19	Virginia TESOL (VATESOL) 2019, Charlotesville, Virginia, USA. http://www.vatesol.cloverpad.org/
October 2	TESL Toronto AGM, Toronto, Ontario Canada. http://tesltoronto.org/
October 18–19	Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) 40th Conference, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. https://www.atesl.ca/conference/program/
November 1–2	Arizona Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (AZTESOL) 2019 Conference, Flagstaff, Arizone, USA. https://aztesol.org/2019/04/16/conferences/save-the-date-aztesol-2019-state-conference-nov-1-2-in-flagstaff/

EDITOR'S NOTE

As the newly appointed editor of TESL Ontario's CONTACT Magazine, I wasn't quite sure what to write for my first "Editor's Note". Should I introduce myself like we do on the first day of school? Maybe that would be too cliché. Should I say something prophetic? That might be pompous. If I could, I'd probably just post a meme, or better yet, a GIF, but then you probably wouldn't take me seriously. So, I'll go with cliché. My name is Nicola Carozza, and I'm an English language instructor in Toronto. Over the last 10 years, I have worked with EAP students in both Canada and China. I have a background in communications and ELT, and I tend to (well, try to at least) combine teaching and media together. I also serve as the President-elect of TESL Toronto. Working on my first issue of CONTACT has been exciting, but also daunting—wanting to make sure everything is acceptable for the readership. Hopefully, you enjoy what the issue has to offer. So without further ado...

In this issue, Alice Sun-mi Kim explores why some students choose English names and the psychological and socio-economic impacts names have for international students in Canada. John Wayne N. dela Cruz summarizes reports on the advantages of practicing plurilingual pedagogies in classroom tasks when teaching L2 vocabulary at the post-secondary level. Christina Cole presents reasons for including Indigenous content in ESL/EAP curricula.

The issue also includes Catrina Ascenuik's Cultural Dig project at the Ryerson English as an Additional Language (REAL) Institute. Mahgol Izadi and Joumana Baltagi demonstrate reasons why art and music are essential for the English language classroom. And Alanna Carter discusses the need for intercultural curricula in the Canadian context.

Enjoy!

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CONTACT

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SHUAI VS. SEAN: WHAT'S IN AN ENGLISH NAME FOR STUDENTS?

By Alice Sun-mi Kim, Toronto, ON

Abstract

In the TESL field, it is relatively common to have some students choose an English name to use in the classroom and the broader English-speaking environment. The push factors behind students choosing to use an English name are variable and complex; the socioeconomic and psychological implications behind taking on an English identity are also as variable and complex. This article aims to explore these factors and emphasize the importance of understanding why students, usually non-Anglo and from communities of colour, would choose to take on an English name and the implications for the classroom. The author does this while reflecting on her experience as a second-generation visible minority who also has had the dichotomous experience of having two names and identities in Toronto, Canada.

"A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language." – Dale Carnegie

It is well-known in the TESOL community that many students take on an English name different from one's birth name, and it is more common in some groups of students than others. In fact, among some Asian students, the practice of taking on an English name is almost de facto and one that is practiced not only in English-speaking countries, but in many schools in Asia as well (Chien, 2012; McPherron, 2009). As such, a Haeda might also be known as Heidi, Mohammed becomes Moe, and Sun-mi goes by Alice. The instructor will use the chosen

English name for the student and, over time, that name will represent the student for the instructor without much thought over the possible cultural, economic, psychological, and pedagogical implications it may have on the student. As an instructor who also possesses this dichotomous identity that comes with having two names, I found myself pondering the deeper reasons for and implications of this practice for students, as both learners and non-Anglo, people of colour in society.

Before exploring this phenomenon, however, a little introduction of myself may be needed. Friends, work colleagues, and acquaintances know me as Alice. This has been my name since grade school and I feel, after inhabiting it for a good part of my life, like Alice. However, my given Korean birth name is Sun-mi (김선미). It is pronounced with an aspirated /s/ rather than a hard /s̚/, with the vowel /ʌ/ in the first syllable. According to my mother, who tried to describe it as precisely as she could, the characters allude to being beautiful and gentle (after which I momentarily questioned the choice, but I digress). What I do know is that my father chose the name, and then also Alice a few years later. After immigrating to Canada, like many other Korean immigrants, he felt that it was necessary to give me an English name in an attempt to help make the lives of my sister and myself easier in this new country. Thus, one's given birth name was, in theory, to be used by family and close friends while the English name was to be used outside when dealing with the public. Having the experience of having more than one personal name myself, the act of taking on English names by my predominantly mainland Chinese students resonated with me and prompted an exploration of this practice. There may be various and complex reasons behind taking on an English name for students in an English-speaking context, including establishing learner identity and autonomy, cultural parallels of adopting various names, and socioeconomic factors, which I will examine here. In addition, a discussion of the factors behind this phenomenon cannot be had without exploring the psychological impact of changing one's name, and so this will be discussed as well, followed by comments on the implications for the classroom.

Learner Identity and Autonomy

In order to discuss learner identity and its importance to learner autonomy, a brief discussion of some key poststructuralist theories of language need to be

had. Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and literary theorist, emphasized the social and dialogic practice of constructing meaning through joint speech rather than looking at communication as solely a demonstration of linguistic competence (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 416; Robinson, 2001). In other words, meaning in communication is co-created through the 'struggle' of dialogic communication between interlocutors, which is also impacted by the social context and positions held by the speakers. As such, poststructuralists like Bourdieu (1991, as cited in Kim, 2007; Robinson, 2001) placed emphasis on the power structures that influence language construction and meaning and therefore, the impact and value placed on an interaction is closely tied to the power and value ascribed to the speaker. Learner identity is largely influenced by this perception, in that learners of English, a language with immense cultural capital, are automatically positioned and may also position themselves as subordinate. However, this negotiation of social position is also fluid and can be manipulated to achieve a desired identity within a given language community (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 414). Through the construct of imagined communities and identities, language learners have a desired outcome to aspire toward (namely, becoming a competent member of the language community), where a range of identities are possible (p. 415). In other words, an investment is being made toward this imagined community and identity, and one of the first of many steps toward investing in an English-oriented identity is in the adoption of an English name (Edwards, 2006, p. 96). The practice of selecting an English name among TESOL students through the lens of language learning and autonomy may be interpreted as an autonomous and productive, rather than deficit-based, practice on the part of students.

The elements of learner identity and autonomy are crucial for students to form in their journey as English-language students, but how it is expressed can vary from student to student. When discussing learner identity and autonomy, I cannot help but recall a time when I felt a visceral sense of some students cringing while I was calling out their Chinese names on the first day of class. The first day of class is already an anxious day for instructors and students alike, so all utterances and exchanges seemed to take on more weight. As I was calling roll in one class, a student blurted out, somewhat defiantly, "you can just call me Bob, it's easier".

I interpreted Bob's comment as carrying out at least two functions: first, it was to establish that he could speak English relatively well and had already taken on an English identity in some way, and second, he likely wanted to relieve both the teacher and students from the collective embarrassment of having to listen to their instructor butcher their names. While I do not know the history behind the selection of his name (i.e. whether it was a teacher or he himself who chose it, why it was chosen, when it was assigned), Bob was asserting himself and his identity in this new high-stakes situation, and in this way, took on a more self-directed, agentive role in class.

Sociocultural Factors Behind Naming Practices

The practice of having multiple names is also fairly common in many cultures and usually serves the function of clarifying the relationship between two interlocutors. Within the Chinese context, having multiple names was historically not uncommon among the educated in China. According to Lee (1998, as cited in Diao, 2014), an educated person could have three names: a ming, a given name by parents, a zi, a self-assigned name, and a hao, a nickname given by peers. All three types of names served to demonstrate the relationship between speakers and correspond with the register of language that would be used in their interactions as well. While this is no longer as commonplace, the concept of having multiple names for different relationships and contexts is a familiar practice in China (Lee, 1998, as cited in Diao, 2014; Edwards, 2006; Heffernan, 2010). As well, the reasons behind selecting and assigning English names are diverse and specific to the needs of different students. In a study of US-based Chinese university students, Diao (2014) found a number of self-professed reasons why these students decided to take on English names. First, it was easier for instructors to remember than Chinese names. It provided students a certain mobility with "different kinds of people" (p. 214), and it was something that could be negotiated depending on the social context. Diao concludes that the selection and function of English names versus Chinese given names were interpreted through an adherence to either perceived community practices or cosmopolitanism by students (p. 219). This corresponds with Heffernan's

(2010) findings when he explored the use of English names among East Asians in Toronto. He found that there were both pragmatic (having to do with ease of pronunciation) and cultural reasons behind the adoption of English names for the Korean and Chinese community, but not for the Japanese community, interestingly (p. 32). With respect to pronunciation, one might observe students who may select English names that have the same initial sound as their given name, so that Shuai becomes Sean, Cheon-nu is now Charles, and Wangaiqing goes by Wendy. The cultural piece, he argues, comes from the naming practices that already exist in China and Korea where having multiple personal names, like a school or work name, is commonplace (p. 32). As an example of the compartmentalized nature of these names, I can use myself. I am Alice in my work and personal life, but among those in the Korean community who are a part of my mother's social circle and generation, I am Sun-mi. Within the Christian community in Korea, which makes up over 50% of the population, it is not uncommon for members to use Christian names like Esther or Maria to signify their membership with the church (Kim, 2007, p. 119). As a former British colony, the Hong Kong Chinese community also adopts English names at higher rates than in mainland China, and often times, the names are assigned by the family rather than the individual (Heffernan, 2010, p. 33). Expressing individuality and creativity may be another factor behind the selection of an English name, as studied by McPherron (2009). He also examined the reasons and selection of English names among university students in China and found that while some students chose traditional names associated with the Anglo community, others selected names to express their individuality and playfulness (i.e. Money). This corresponds with my experience as well as those of my colleagues who have taught students called Kinder, Milk, and Ocean. It is evident that there may be a sense of impermanence as well as function when selecting English names for these students, and thus, they feel freer to select non-traditional names that display some aspects of their character or persona.

Socioeconomic Factors Behind Naming Practices

While English-language learners may be adopting English or English-sounding names for reasons of establishing learner identity and autonomy as well as for

functional efficiency, there may also be socioeconomic factors at play for students and former students who take on an English name, particularly within the English-speaking context. It is not difficult to find study after study outlining how ethnic minorities with non-English sounding names in countries like Canada and the US 'whiten' their resumes in an effort to not so much as gain an edge in their applications, but rather to put themselves on as equal footing with their white and Anglo counterparts. In one study, thousands of applications were sent to employers in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, out of which researchers found that candidates with Anglo-sounding names were 35% more likely to be chosen by employers than those with non-Anglo names, despite identical education, skills, and work histories (Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2012, p. 3). In fact, even when employers had an explicit pro-diversity hiring policy, minority applicants fared worse than with employers who did not, likely due to the fact that these minority applicants were less likely to 'whiten' their résumés at all (Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik & Jun, 2016). Applicants who modified their résumés to appear more 'American' in this US study did so by changing their first names, adding in middle initials in order to sound more American, and deleting any experiences connected to their racial or ethnic groups (Kang et al., 2016, p. 475). Applicants with Asian-sounding names (specifically Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani) with Canadian experience were less likely to be called for an interview than those with Anglo-sounding names, and there was no discernible difference in callback rates between applicants with Asian-sounding names with Canadian experience and those with international experience (Banerjee, Reitz, & Oreopoulos, 2018, p. 3). Unfortunately, the discrimination does not end there. If and when racialized job applicants make it into the workplace, the pressure to accommodate and essentially 'whiten' their identities may continue in subtle ways. Shah (2019) writes about the pressure that employees of ethnic minority backgrounds feel to change their names into something more 'English', as highlighted in a study where out of 1000 participants, a third of them indicated that they were asked to do so at the workplace (para. 2). He adds a revealing anecdote of when his father, Vikram, was asked if he could be referred to as Victor by Ken, a white colleague. Vikram responded, "[t]hat depends. Can I call you Kanubhai?" (para. 6). In the face of these findings, it is then unsurprising that non-Anglo, ethnic minority

job applicants in English-speaking countries are more likely to anglicize their own names, bestow English-sounding names to their children, and implicitly internalize as well as perpetuate the message that this is a necessary part of one's successful integration in this context. Students who study English within English-speaking milieus are also likely aware of the racial discrimination and biases that exist in the job market and society at large. This, in turn, likely compounds the desire to take on an English identity, starting by adopting an English name or Anglicizing one's name. Disheartening as it may seem, until and when systemic and structural discrimination in society ceases to exist or is significantly reduced (which may arguably never happen), prospective employees will continue to do what they can to gain a foothold in this society.

Psychosocial Impact of Naming Practices

When students or individuals use their English names, there may also be a psychosocial accommodation that is happening that can deeply impact their self-perception and identity. A student or individual who adopts an English-sounding name does so with an understanding of how they may be viewed in the eyes of others. W. E. B. DuBois, an American sociologist and historian, coined the term, "double-consciousness" which encapsulates the experience of being constantly aware of how one is being perceived by others, in describing the experience of black Americans (DuBois, 1897). Visible minorities in the English-speaking world today are likely to be very familiar with the experience of understanding oneself through the eyes of others and as a result, may make minor or major adjustments to assimilate and adapt, in the hopes of one day thriving. Yet, when one makes these accommodations, there can be a psychological dissonance that can form over time, and it may take some time to come to terms with. Zheping Huang, a journalist for Quartz magazine, details how he adopted various English names throughout his studies, from grade school in China to university in the US, going by William, Peter, and James over the years before returning to William by university. It was not until he was in Hong Kong for graduate school that he decided to go by Ping, a shortening of his first name. Today, he publishes as Zheping Huang. Mohamed Hassan, a producer and poet, revealed his experiences as a person of colour in a white-dominant world

in his spoken word film, (Un)Learning My Name. In it, he describes how in reinforcing the correct pronunciation of his name, he was also asserting who he was after decades of navigating internalised racism and discrimination. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) make the bold argument that teachers who do not make an effort to correctly pronounce a student's name are unknowingly committing racial microaggressions that can have a lasting impact on the student. In the article, they outline numerous cases of former students who endured feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, and shame when their name was called in school. This shame seemed to be alleviated once names were shortened or changed entirely by some students, as was the case for Anita, now a Chinese American teacher. The following is a description of her experience:

> Every teacher she ever had mispronounced her name. She dreaded daily attendance, never raised her hand, and tried to remain inconspicuous and anonymous in the classroom. She graduated from one of Portland's high schools with honors. At the honors ceremony prior to graduation, a vice principal walked to the podium to present the student with a prestigious award. He butchered her name mercilessly, shaking his head and laughing as others laughed along. The student slumped in her seat and hid behind the person seated in front of her. She did not go onstage to receive her award and did not attend graduation the next night. As soon she was able to, the student changed her name to 'Anita'. (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012, p. 11)

This dread of having one's name called is also reflective of my own experience in grade school when I remember the anxiety I felt when my teachers would mispronounce my name when calling roll, by either pronouncing it with a hard /ʂ̬/, or with the vowel /uː/ rather than /ʌ/, or simply call out, Sun?. The teasing by other students that ensued was inevitable as well as my own embarrassment, and so when I eventually decided that I would be Alice by fourth grade, the first-day-of-class jitters were no longer as potent. I remember this to be a conscious decision on my part since my father had given me the name Alice years before, but I had still gone by Sun-mi without much thought up until this point. Despite this effort on my part to take control of my experience in school and among peers,

I cannot deny that a part of me is saddened that this was the action I took at the time. I am also disconcertingly aware that a lifetime of using Alice rather than Sun-mi likely has afforded me certain gains, including having little discomfort during roll call in grade school, smoother introductions with new colleagues and friends, to possibly, job interviews, something that my eight year-old self might not have fully understood, but could intuit in some way. Since I have been Alice for most of my life (and feel that I embody the name now), I do not and will not ever know what my life would be like had I remained Sun-mi.

Implications for the Classroom

To return to the TESOL classroom, in the face of this information, how does one approach our students, specifically their names and identities, in the classroom? The common response is if a student insists on being referred to by their non-Anglo birth name, they will have to accept possible mispronunciation of their name. As well, if a student insists on being called Chris or Ariel or Pearl, why should this be a problem? My argument is that it is not and should not be a problem at all, whether students decide to stick with their given birth names or with a different name of their choosing. As instructors, our duty is to accept the student and their identity as they are at that point in time with an awareness of the social, cultural, and psychological forces that influence students' choices and their lived experiences. We have seen that the factors behind adopting an English name are complex and multi-layered. Students take on English names to create an English identity, to take control of their language learning experience, to accommodate teachers and peers, to find employment in the English-speaking world, and ultimately, to participate in the adopted society in a way that they feel they have control over. However, if a student decides to opt out of adopting an English name and uses their own given name, it is incumbent upon the instructor to do what they can to learn how to pronounce the name to the best of their ability, or at the very least, demonstrate in some way that their names are important and not a burden that is being imposed on them. As instructors who teach English as a second language, we wield undeniable power over our students as we directly and indirectly represent what is acceptable or not in the English-speaking world. In the last few years, I have tried to take time on the first day of class

(sometimes half the class period) to demonstrate that I, the instructor, want to learn the students' names and that the class is about growth and development as students of English and as individuals. I might do this in the form of icebreakers that require learning each other's names and preface it with the point that I would like to be corrected if I do mispronounce their names, stressing that it is important for me to learn the proper pronunciation of their names. I add that students are not required to have English names, which some may not be aware of, especially if they are coming from schools that required an English name. Paired with the heightened tension and excitement of it being the first day of class, students are more likely to internalize this message deeply. Other possible activities can include reading about or listening to the experiences of people who have taken on different, more easy to pronounce names, like that of Zheping Huang, or Mohammed Hassan, to acknowledge the importance of one's name in the educational environment and beyond. After reviewing such examples, students can be encouraged to discuss these cases and examine the reasons for and against adopting a different, English-sounding name. Reflective writing can be a follow-up homework assignment where students describe the reasons and experiences behind their selected or given names. Ultimately, the goal here is to underline the importance of one's name and identity for students on the first day of class or early in the term, and then accept whatever name a student chooses. As instructors, we have a duty to not only teach, but to empower our students to become better versions of themselves. We must meet students where they are, but allow room for growth as well. We need to be aware that a student who may have started off as Jessica on the first day of class will one day decide that she really is Xinyi later on.

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Author Bio

Alice Sun-mi Kim is currently an EAP instructor with the International Foundation Program at the University of Toronto. She has taught EAP, ESP, and general English to students in Canada and the Middle East for over ten years. Her areas of interest include critical pedagogy, sociolinguistics, and assessment and testing. The first day of class still makes her nervous, but in a good way.

FOUND IN TRANSLATION: PLURILINGUALISM AS PEDAGOGY FOR TEACHING POST-SECONDARY VOCABULARY

By John Wayne N. dela Cruz, Montreal, QC

Abstract

Monolingual language teaching practices persist as the norm in increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse settings like Canada. This monolingual predisposition in second language (L2) education ignores multilingual students' fluid and overlapping linguistic realities, and it neglects the full potential of their existing linguistic repertoire and competences in developing specific aspects of L2 acquisition. On the contrary, an emergent pedagogical framework–plurilingualism–offers an innovative approach to language teaching by highlighting this relationship between languages and encouraging agency in multilingual language use in the classroom. To that end, this article summarizes empirical research in applied linguistics that report on the advantages of practicing plurilingual pedagogies in classroom tasks when teaching L2 vocabulary at the post-secondary level. Studies include English, Spanish, and Sepedi as target second or additional languages, and were conducted in Canada, United States, and South Africa. Both quantitative and qualitative results are discussed. The article aims to provide an evidence-based resource guide for post-secondary English as Second Language (ESL) teachers on how to and why practice the following plurilingual techniques–(1) translanguaging, (2) translation, and (3) cross-linguistic analysis–when teaching L2 vocabulary. As well, when applicable, online resources exemplifying the step-by-step use of these plurilingual strategies are also cited.

L2 Vocabulary Teaching in a Multilingual Canada

Words are not isolated units of a language: they are components of a larger interconnected system that allow second language (L2) learners to access other components in that system (Nation, 2013). For example, knowing a word is systematically linked to knowing its spelling and pronunciation. Indeed, vocabulary proficiency has even been shown to predict post-secondary English as a Second Language (ESL) students' reading ability, as well as their capacity to read on their own (Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010). As such, the development of L2 learners' vocabulary knowledge intuitively equates to the overall development of their L2 competencies.

While there are many different techniques that can be applied in the L2 classroom to raise students' vocabulary competencies, there is a paucity of resources that inform and support post-secondary educators of emergent plurilingual pedagogies–teaching strategies that highlight a similar theme of interconnectedness, in this case between the languages in a learner's linguistic repertoire. In the field of teaching ESL, Canada's growing linguistic and cultural diversity offers the perfect opportunity to practice pedagogies that capitalize on language learners' plurilingual backgrounds. Indeed, between 2011 and 2016 alone, there was 17.5% growth in the number of Canadians who reported speaking more than one language at home, and 7 out of 10 of whom even speak a mother tongue other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2017).

That said, I will provide in this article an up-to-date review of applied linguistics research illustrating the advantages of incorporating plurilingual techniques when teaching vocabulary in post-secondary ESL, with a focus on (1) translanguaging, (2) translation, and (3) cross-linguistic analysis. As a background, I will first discuss how contemporary L2 education in Canada have succumbed to a unilingual tendency that draws on historical and existing language policies, which ignore accumulating research on the advantages of multilingualism. As well, I will briefly define plurilingualism as a theoretical and as a pedagogical framework before delving into its practical classroom applications. Towards the

end, I will include a short section listing existing online resources (e.g., videos; websites) that are useful for practicing plurilingual techniques in ESL.

Lost in Translation: ESL in a 'Bilingual, Multicultural' Canada

There is now consistent evidence in applied linguistics research confirming the many cognitive and practical benefits of learning and speaking multiple languages, both inside and outside of second language (L2) classrooms (e.g., Kroll, Gullifer & Rossi, 2013; Peal & Lambert, 1962). However, existing L2 curricula and programs in increasingly multilingual settings like Canada still largely deliver language courses in a monolingual way (Piccardo, 2013; 2017). For example, teachers and students would often use the target language only, while students are especially not encouraged to draw on their potentially larger existing linguistic repertoire and competences (Cummins, 2007). Much to the disservice of many L2 learners, this pedagogical practice contradicts what empirical research illustrates: that multilinguals' known languages are all activated in the brain when they speak since they cannot consciously nor selectively separate these languages from each other (Bickes, 2004); indeed, this language non-selectivity is specially true when accessing, recognizing, comprehending, and producing vocabulary (Kroll et al., 2013).

What such unilingual pedagogy subscribes to, however, are existing language policies in Canada that promote the use of one of the two 'official' languages over the other 'minority' ones. The federal government for example has historically pushed for a 'bicultural Canadian' within a 'bilingual state' that officially speaks English and French–the languages of the nation's supposed founding 'races' (e.g., Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism; Krasny & Sachar, 2017). This eventually led to current pervasive language policies, both in social and administrative spaces that neglect contributions from other linguistic and ethnic communities to today's Canada, while deceptively–if not also ironically– promoting bilingualism in a multicultural country (e.g., Bilingualism in a Multilingual Framework; Haque, 2012). At a micro level, such mandates have influenced the creation of provincial governing bodies that police the proper use

and teaching of 'correct' versions of a language (e.g., French; Office québécois de la langue française, 2019).

Hence, it is not surprising that many Canadian language teachers and learners find it challenging to overcome the 'monolingual predisposition' of L2 education even in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Piccardo, 2013). From experience, I can attest that this continues to be the case in ESL classrooms in Québec's Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CÉGEPs), post-secondary institutions that serve as an alternative to or a stepping stone toward a university education. However, recent inclusive changes in language curricula in Canada demonstrate that it is possible and necessary for L2 education to reflect Canadian students' ethnic and linguistic plurality. For example, Alberta is set to offer K-12 Filipino language and culture programs by 2020, which is in response to the province's fastest growing Tagalog-speaking population (French, 2019).

Thus, considering the significance of vocabulary learning in L2 students' overall language development, it is imperative that language educators, including those who teach at the post-secondary level, are informed and have access to evidence-based resource guides that illustrate how plurilingualism meets vocabulary teaching in practical classroom pedagogy.

Plurilingualism as Theory

As a theoretical framework, plurilingualism supports the idea that a language speaker possesses a linguistic repertoire that consists of all that speaker's known languages, which are interrelated (Council of Europe [CoE], 2001). In line with empirical evidence cited above (Bickes, 2004; Kroll et al., 2013), this theory then also reflects and exploits how multilinguals' cognitively store and access their languages. Indeed, this single repertoire acts as a tool box that contains one's named languages as individual but overlapping tools, which are available to be flexibly drawn from and used as necessary (Coste, Zarate & Moore, 1997/2009). For example, one might have to use their English to read and write certain texts for school, but they could go home and switch from English to French to communicate with family members. In this sense, one's linguistic competence

is then not reduced to individual and separate proficiencies that they attain for each of their languages, but is attributed to what they are capable of achieving using their composite linguistic resource pool (CoE, 2018).

Plurilingualism as Pedagogy

As an emerging pedagogical framework in teaching ESL, plurilingualism then highlights the relationship between languages and the inherent cultural knowledge that comes with knowing these languages. The goal of this pedagogy is not only to develop learners' proficiencies in one language, but also to build up a communicative competence in all of the languages in the learners' repertoire exactly through an associative use of these languages (CoE, 2001). In other words, plurilingualism, unlike the monolingual view to L2 instruction, puts forth this interrelationship between the students' languages to encourage agency in their own language use (Marshall & Moore, 2018). Ultimately, this awareness of and capitalization on the language learners' composite multilingual and multicultural resource pool will be part of their plurilingual and pluricultural competence (PPC) (Costa et al., 1997/2009; CoE, 2001; 2018), a skill that L2 teachers can further foster in their classrooms through plurilingual approaches to language teaching.

Plurilingual Approaches to Teaching ESL Vocabulary: How and Why?

What follows is a brief guide to using 3 translanguaging, translation, and cross-linguistic analysis in teaching ESL vocabulary at the post-secondary level, based on recent and relevant quantitative and qualitative studies in applied linguistics. While English is not the only target language involved in the selected research sample below, all nonetheless support the use of a plurilingual pedagogy to promote L2 lexical acquisition among college and university students.

(1) Translanguaging

Translanguaging refers to the language practices of multilinguals and plurilinguals, which involve strategic and fluid use of the languages in their linguistic repertoire to make meaning (García, 2011). In L2 classrooms,

translanguaging has also come to refer to the process of "purposeful pedagogical alternation of languages" (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 262) in order to gain knowledge, make sense, and communicate about a target language in written or spoken modes (Wei, 2011).

One example of explicit teaching strategy employing translanguaging is contrastive elaboration. In vocabulary lessons, contrastive elaboration means allowing learners to criss-cross between their known languages to enhance understanding, and extend the meanings, of target vocabulary items and concepts beyond the language of input (Makalela, 2015). Other examples of translanguaging tasks could involve engaging students in pedagogical and spontaneous translanguaging by encouraging them to: think and talk about their personal plurilingual practices; guess vocabulary meanings of non-target language items; and speculate about interpretations of L2 idiomatic expressions (Galante, forthcoming).

Research evidence

Using control and experimental groups and a pretest-posttest design, Makalela (2015) investigated the effectiveness of contrastive elaboration as a pedagogical treatment in developing vocabulary knowledge among post-secondary students who are learning Sepedi as an additional language in a South African university. Pretest scores from a word recognition test show that both control and experimental groups performed similarly (and poorly) prior to the introduction of the translanguaging treatment. Six months after the experimental group received instruction using collaborative elaboration, posttests show that they significantly outperformed the control group (which received conventional teaching practices) by about 36 points in the word recognition test. As well, statistical analyses support the significance of the translanguaging group's better vocabulary gains.

Another study in Toronto, Canada looked at the impact of pedagogical translanguaging tasks (see above) on the lexical development of international post-secondary students enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program (Galante, forthcoming). This study tested the EAP students' academic English vocabulary at the end of the program to investigate differential vocabulary

gains between a translanguaging treatment group and a monolingual comparison group. Similar to the above-mentioned study, results show that vocabulary gains among students in the treatment group (who engaged in translanguaging during classroom tasks) were significantly higher after the EAP course than among those in the comparison group. These findings further support the facilitative effect of pedagogical translanguaging on academic vocabulary learning.

Online resource

For a video about incorporating translanguaging in a vocabulary activity, refer to Zullo's (2019) YouTube video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUoXAK7Cdbs&t). This activity was designed for teaching idiomatic phrases, one of the contexts in which new word forms and meanings are learned (Nation, 2013), to advanced adult learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL). That said, this activity was prepared with a particular student context in mind, hence some modifications might be required when partially/wholly adapting it in other classroom settings.

(2) Translation

As one of the more straight-forward plurilingual technique, translation in L2 vocabulary teaching involves using direct translations of the target words from the language of input into the students' first (L1) or additional languages. Similar to translanguaging, the goal is to generate associations and meanings from L1 translations of L2 vocabulary to scaffold students' acquisition of new words, which could require abstract reasoning skills, especially when learning more abstract post-secondary materials (Pujol-Ferran, DiSanto, Rodríguez & Morales, 2016). Particularly among L2 learners with lower (i.e., beginner's) proficiency levels, teachers can help reduce the cognitive costs of learning new vocabulary items if L1 translations are provided instead of L2 definitions; this aids learners to focus their cognitive resources more on acquiring unknown vocabulary and less on learning the meanings of the target language (Joyce, 2018).

Research evidence

The following research draws from findings involving the teaching of L2 English content words to immigrant students enrolled in subject-area courses at an American college (Pujol-Ferran et al., 2016). These courses include: Chemistry, which used translation for teaching scientific concepts in English; Education, which used translation for discussing content English vocabulary; and Drama, which used translation for learning English vocabulary during script readings and memorization. The courses are taught in classrooms comprised of multilingual students who speak mostly Spanish, but also French, and African and Asian languages as their mother tongue. It is also noteworthy that students in the study are simultaneously taking remedial or ESL instruction along with the abovementioned courses.

Course achievements of students reveal that a large majority of them did not drop their classes, and even passed the courses' assignments, including mid-term and final exams. Specifically, up to 80% of students in the Chemistry course remained in and passed the class, while 95% and 100% of students, respectively, remained in and passed the Education and Drama courses. Course evaluations by students also reveal positive feedback toward the Chemistry and Education classes. These findings are supported by earlier research, which demonstrates that introducing academic content, such as new vocabulary, through the learner's strongest linguistic modality has a positive effect on their ultimate academic achievement and attitude (Honigsfeld, 2003).

Online resource

For a video about using translation in a vocabulary lesson, watch dela Cruz and Nguyen's (2019) YouTube video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9L2b6bbrEw&t). This activity was designed for teaching common vocabulary to adult learners of Tagalog as a heritage language, while also introducing affixation (in-fixing and partial reduplication) in the target language. Similarly, this activity was prepared with a particular classroom context in mind, hence modifications should be considered when adapting it in other settings.

(3) Cross-linguistic Analysis

Cross-linguistic analysis (CLA) involves a systematic comparison and contrasting of target L2 words with their L1 counterparts. In this process, similarities and differences between vocabulary forms and meanings are made explicitly or implicitly. For example, connections can be made through a word's spelling, pronunciation, and definitions between the L2 (e.g., English in ESL) and the learner's L1. In addition, analysis of vocabulary items can be done at the semantic and syntactic levels, in order to learn new words in grammatical and meaningful contexts. One of CLA's goals is not only to advance multi/plurilingual students' mastery of specific aspects of a language such as vocabulary, but more importantly to strengthen their metalinguistic skills and enhance their multilingual proficiencies, allowing them to be able to think about the target language in the context of their multilingual minds (Pujol-Ferran et al., 2016). This way, students are also made aware about potential positive transfer or interference of their L1 knowledge to/with the L2 that they are learning.

Research evidence

Another course in the same American college was investigated in Pujol-Ferran et al.'s (2016) study, which is partially discussed above. The class, Comparative Linguistics (English/Spanish), had a heterogenous group of bilingual Latin students with varying competencies and proficiencies in English and Spanish; most students are simultaneously taking ESL or remedial classes as well. Specifically for employing CLA, the teacher followed these steps: 1) in pairs or small groups, students were asked to make connections between two materials, and highlight similarities and differences between English and Spanish; 2) then the class as a whole discusses the lesson's focus based on step 1; 3) and the teacher elaborates when needed.

Results show that 91% of the students did not drop the course: they also passed course requirements including the mid-term and final exams. Student evaluations also reveal positive feedback toward the teaching approach used in the course. These findings have huge implications for the given context, especially because students are not all equally highly proficient in the course languages of

instruction. Even more important, these findings show that a large majority of the students were able to succeed in the class despite needing remedial and ESL classes. This study supports how CLA can make academic, especially vocabulary, more accessible to minority students by stimulating them to manipulate their input and relate them to their existing linguistic knowledge.

Online resource

The previously mentioned (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9L2b6bbrEw &t) video by dela Cruz and Nguyen (2019) also demonstrates the employment of cross-linguistic analysis when teaching new word forms and structures (e.g., infixing and partial reduplication). Again, this activity was prepared with a specific context in mind and must be adapted accordingly.

Found in Translation: ESL in a Plurilingual Canada

The importance of developing L2 learners' vocabulary knowledge is key to developing learners' overall L2 proficiency. Just as important, however, is for teachers to have access to and use teaching techniques that validate and capitalize on their students' full linguistic potential. The studies cited in this article elucidate how plurilingual pedagogies can help in the acquisition of new lexical items by post-secondary learners in ESL and other L2 programs as evinced in students' vocabulary test results and overall course achievements. Yet, the paramount take-home message is this: there is increasing necessity and potential for language programs to reflect in classroom pedagogy the pluricultural and plurilingual realities and practices of learners, especially in growingly diverse settings like Canada. Even if they work only with the more rudimentary units of L2 learning such as vocabulary, language educators still possess the capacity to overcome monolingual policies that permeate multilingual classrooms, and all the while support their students' language gains through a validating, meaningful, and authentic language learning experience–one word at a time.

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TOWARDS A PEDAGOGY FOR RECONCILIATION–INDIGENIZATION: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT BELONGS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

By Christina Cole, Toronto, ON

Abstract

This article explores the reasons for the recent trend in institutions of higher education to incorporate Indigenous content in curricula. It explores some of the challenges faced by instructors in implementing this and outlines dangers to avoid. Several responses to these challenges are proposed, and suggestions are offered for best practices in how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing into our classrooms. A bibliography of sources will be provided.

"Challenge is an integral part of transformative experience"; I came across this line in "Unsettling Faculty Minds: A Faculty Learning Community on Indigenization" (Yeo et al., 2019, p. 38). It resonated with me because this has been true in my life. Challenge usually precedes and instigates change, whether that change is internal or external. However, despite the momentum produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the recent acknowledgment of the treatment of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women as genocide, there still remains resistance among educators to answering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action.

It is important to recognize that universities, including my own, the University of Toronto, have acknowledged the role they played in the erasure of Indigenous culture and the justification of cultural genocide. Universities and colleges across Canada have begun responding to that Call to Action by developing strategies for Indigenization and hiring Indigenous professors. Indeed, an entire Spring issue this year (2019) of New Directions in Teaching and Learning was devoted to the topic of Indigenization in Canadian institutes of higher education.

Yet, when it comes to integrating Indigenous perspectives or issues into the ESL curriculum, there remains resistance, discomfort, and ambivalence about the place of such material within English language teaching. Some teachers say they are not comfortable teaching this material. Their difficulty confronting this subject matter might be attributed to defensiveness about entrenched beliefs, blindness to them, or to white fragility, a term coined by Robin DiAngelo to describe "the disbelieving defensiveness white people exhibit when their ideas about race and racism are challenged, or when challenged about complicity in racist systems of privilege" (as cited in Waldman, 2018). Settlers may find ways to evade confronting their own participation in colonial systems, what is called a move to innocence. These can include denying settler status by locating colonialism in the past or by identifying with a group distinct from the British and French nations who participated in post-contact historical events (Lowman & Barker, 2019). Another attitude often expressed is that teachers do not know enough about the topic to teach it and its corollary, that only Indigenous people should teach this material. None of these arguments, as we shall see, are valid. I will address these points throughout this article.

Faced with this resistance, I have asked myself why I believe so strongly that there is a need to Indigenize ESL curriculum. What is my knowledge based on? How do I hold myself accountable? In other words, what are my reasons for doing this, and how can this translate into action? In the course of my reading, I have encountered many terms new to me, such as white fragility, decolonization, environmental racism, settler identity, equity literacy, epistemic ignorance, and pedagogy of place, to name a few. I have also been reading material recommended to me by Brenda Wastasecoot, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Indigenous Studies at the University of Toronto. But I must emphasize that I am only at the

beginning of this journey, and I have much more to learn. So, I share with you some of what I have managed to synthesize over the last few years.

I should clarify that this article is not primarily about communicating what Indigenous content to include in the ESL classroom. Instead, it is a polemical piece, exploring the reasons why we should incorporate Indigenous voices and perspectives into our ESL/EAP curriculum, what the challenges are, how to avoid certain pitfalls, and suggestions for best practices. To address this topic, I will need to make clear some assumptions and beliefs that underlie my argument. For instance, the sources I have consulted in researching Indigenization in higher education, specifically in an ESL or EAP context, argue that it is not merely about teaching content (such as Residential schools or treaties) nor is it an add-on, something superfluous or "subordinate that detracts from more important information to be taught", which Dewar (1998, p. 17) found was the reason behind some teachers' reluctance to implement this material. Let us begin with a definition.

What is Indigenization?

According to one definition, "Indigenization recognizes the validity of Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives". It identifies "opportunities for Indigeneity to be expressed" such as incorporating "Indigenous ways of knowing and doing" ("A brief definition of decolonization and Indigenization", 2017). Moreover, Marlene Brant Castellano (2014) adds that it examines "how and to what extent current content and pedagogy reflect the presence of Indigenous peoples and the valid contribution of Indigenous knowledge".

One such element that has been identified as a pedagogical tool is the teachings of the medicine wheel, which can "provide an educational framework that can be applied to any educational setting" (Bell, 2014). "Moving from linear models to the interconnectedness of the circle can guide the development of pedagogy and vision for the future" (Graveline as cited in Bell, 2014). The Medicine wheel, an important symbol and source of knowledge for Indigenous peoples, can be divided into many types of quadrants representing, among other things, the four directions, the four seasons, the stages of life, and types of knowledge. Movement in the Medicine wheel begins in the East and travels clockwise

towards the North. One division of the Medicine wheel that I have found useful is shown in Figure 1: Gifts of the Four Directions.[1] Thinking about Indigenization requires self-reflection or vision, an understanding of history or time, reason which incorporates knowledge, and ultimately, action or accountability, which is informed by wisdom. As Vaudrin-Charette (2019, p. 113) acknowledges, "accountability is central in Indigenous perspectives"; "one of the flaws of our systems of higher education is a tendency to decouple awareness of injustice from the responsibility to challenge justice" (Pitawanakwat as cited in Vaudrin-Charette, 2019, p. 113).

Figure 1: Gifts of the Four Directions

Figure 2 represents the seven sacred teachings or guiding principles of an Indigenous worldview.[2] These have been adopted by many Indigenous "organizations and communities, in one form or another, as a moral stepping stone and cultural foundation...They share the same concepts of abiding by a moral respect for all living things" ("7 Grandfather Teachings", 2019).

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1   Bell, Nicole. (2014). Gifts of the Four Directions [Image]. Retrieved from https://www.edcan.ca/articles/teaching-by-the-medicine-wheel/

2   Sims, Theresa. (2018). *The Seven Grandfather Teachings* [Image]. Retrieved from https://clubrunner.blob.core.windows.net/00000000608/en-ca/files/homepage/7-grandfathers/7grandfathersaug2018.pdf

Figure 2: The Seven Grandfather Teachings

Why Us?

In 2015, the TRC Calls to Action specifically urged educators at Canadian universities and colleges, as well as other levels of education, to "integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in order to build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual self-respect". In addition, they asked that educators "engage with skills-based training in intercultural competence, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism" (TRCC: Calls to Action, 2015, p. 7). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has important implications for all of us, including ESL educators.

Why Now?

Amy Abe states insightfully: "We will always be learners, not masters, in the journey. If we wait to become masters we will never begin" (2017, p.

32). This reminds us that for the vast majority of ESL teachers who are settlers, not Indigenous, this is a life-long journey of learning. We are not the experts. However, we can become allies. As such, we need to seek input from Indigenous colleagues and Elders.

Now more than ever in the geo-political-environmental climate we inhabit today, teachers need to include in their classrooms diverse worldviews and new ways of knowing, seeing, and experiencing the world. We know that our culture is often invisible to us, and yet it shapes our thoughts, our values, and our actions. Adichie (2009) in her TED Talk warns of the dangers of only interpreting others' lives through the single preconceived story we impose on them.

Wade Davis argues in his TED talk (2003) that the world is losing diversity in ethnospheres (the diverse cultural web of life in the world since the beginning of consciousness) at an even greater rate than species in the biosphere. (Sadly, he may no longer be correct in this statistic.) However, this does not diminish his example of the loss of 50% of the 6000 languages spoken in the world within the last fifty or so years.

Speaking of the biosphere, that brings us to another reason for why now? We are living in an increasingly polarized world, which Davis claims "300 years from now, is not going to be remembered for its wars or its technological innovations, but rather as the era in which we stood by and either actively endorsed or passively accepted the massive destruction of both biological and cultural diversity on the planet" (2003).

This is relevant because as Vaudrin-Charette states, "Indigenizing is not strictly cultural. It is also ecological, economical, relational, and essential to our species' survival" (2019, p. 113). For thousands of years, First Nations and Inuit practiced sustainable use of and sharing of resources. It is pretty clear that they have something to teach us.

Assumptions and Beliefs

As I have been learning about Indigenous worldviews, I have come to realize that the Western academic approach emphasizing reading or knowledge

alone is not enough. Or to clarify, what our Western viewpoint traditionally constructs as knowledge is insufficient. In the Indigenous worldview, the deepest knowledge comes from the heart.

So, my belief in the value of Indigenizing the ESL curriculum is rooted in a commitment to being an ethical educator: that along with demonstrating respect for our students, part of our role as teachers is to expose students to issues of injustice, inequity and racism, and to both model and offer opportunities for intercultural understanding, self-reflection, critical thinking, and different perspectives on what constitutes knowledge and how we see the world. As ESL teachers, we are never just engaged in teaching the technical elements of language. Teaching language, we know, involves teaching culture. During the U.S.A's wars and invasions in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the code name for enemy territory was Indian country, and Geronimo was the code name for Osama bin Laden (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 31–32). As we know, words have power. This is true whether we speak from a culture rooted in oral narrative or from one dominated by the written word. Language is never neutral. When we speak or write, even if we are unaware of it, we always do so from a certain social and political standpoint. Language is political, and by extension, so is language teaching. What we omit speaks as loudly as what we include.

Critical pedagogy teaches us that the classroom is a locus of power dynamics. Whether we acknowledge it or not, teachers hold a position of power. What we learn from reading about decolonization, a necessary step in the process of reconciliation, is that colonialism is not just situated in the past but is replicated in the present through our institutions, ideologies, and epistemology. Settlers are not only those who were born in Canada, but include anyone, including immigrants, who participate in the colonial culture and benefits from it (Lowman & Barker, 2015). As a result, we need to examine how we may inadvertently be contributing to perpetuating this in our teaching. For instance, do we portray Canadian history as a mythic Canadian narrative of heroic struggle and the establishment of a just and distinct society? Do we uncritically offer up Stephen Harper's or Justin Trudeau's apologies to residential school survivors without analyzing the subtext?

Teachers have an obligation to offer a more intercultural, inclusive, equitable vision of society and to help learners recognize, critique, and consider how systems of inequity can be redressed. Both teachers and students need to investigate and recognize their own participation in othering. If we expect our students to develop critical thinking skills, we must be willing to examine our own biases and myths and demonstrate how we reflect on and investigate them. Students are future leaders and potential agents of change. We do not know how what we teach may impact them, but we can be sure it will one way or another.

Land Acknowledgements and Position Statements

We are used to hearing Land Acknowledgments being read at the beginning of conferences and meetings. Best practices dictate that Land Acknowledgments should be more than just a recitation of a script. They should be personalized to include one's own commitments to action and accountability. In my reading about Indigenous perspectives, I discovered the importance of including a Position Statement: in addressing reconciliation, it is important to situate oneself contextually in terms of one's identity and how it influences, biases, or affects one's understanding and outlook on the world. It speaks to an obligation for action by settlers like me to redress what has been taken away from Indigenous peoples. This begins with the land.

Appallingly, the government has failed to address conditions on First Nations reserves, the consequences of Industrial projects that impact traditional lands, waterways, drinking water, and overall health, including birth defects from toxic chemicals. In contrast, I recognize that I am privileged to have access to safe drinking water, good educational opportunities within my community, safe housing, and adequate healthcare.

Colonialism persists in Canada's institutions, such as schools, which consistently fail Indigenous youth by removing them from their communities. It also exists in prisons, which incarcerate Indigenous peoples in disproportion to their population. A United Nations committee found that an Indigenous

youth is more likely to end up in prison than to graduate high school (Restoule, 2017). The effects of colonialism impact Indigenous people's life expectancy, rates of poverty, suicide rates, and food insecurity. As a settler, I am complicit in this colonial system.

Racism continues to pervade Canadian society and has led to and continues to lead to assimilation, discrimination, violence, rape, and the murder of Indigenous peoples. While as a woman, I am more likely to encounter violence than a white man is; a U.N. report on violence against women found that an Indigenous woman is 3 times more likely to encounter violence than I am (as cited in Brake, 2019). I recognize that as I encounter institutions such as schools, the justice system, and healthcare, I will not suffer this same racism due to my privileged position.

Moreover, many Indigenous communities living on reserves also suffer from environmental racism, which is defined as environmental injustice that occurs in practice and in policy within a racialized context.

I feel compelled to address these both personally and as an educator. I would like to be considered an ally who has a responsibility to contribute to the TRC's 94 Calls to Action as best I can. As Justice Murray Sinclair stated about the Calls to Action in the TRC report, "education got us into this mess and it will take education to get us out of it" (as cited in the Assembly of First Nations, 2013).

But how do we go about integrating Indigenous voices and perspectives into our curriculum in a way that does not reflect tokenism, decontextualized content removed from historical events, or marginalization of the real issues, and yet also doesn't focus on victimhood as the sole defining characteristic of how we view Indigenous peoples?

Indigenous worldview vs Colonial worldview

Wilson and Nelson-Moody (2019, p. 54) ask: "What is the benefit of our institutions professing to produce interculturally competent global citizens if we are ignoring or erasing the very voices needed for greater intercultural

problem-solving?" Much of what is summarized in these next two sections comes from the ongoing Coursera course taught by Jean-Paul Restoule on Aboriginal Worldviews and Education, delivered through OISE (Restoule, 2017). Indigenization requires incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and doing and recognizing these as valid. We must recognize that Indigenous worldviews differ from Western colonial worldviews in many significant aspects and that these have played a role in the suppression of Indigenous peoples' rights and culture. The colonial worldview has at its core a belief that land ownership is private, while Indigenous peoples view the land as a shared environment. Western attitudes view the land as an object to be exploited, and its resources extracted, while Indigenous peoples view the land as a teacher, something animate and connected to people.

In the Western colonial view, time is seen as linear, which supports the belief that civilization progresses developmentally along a linear path, and Indigenous peoples were located along this spectrum as less developed and in need of civilizing. In contrast, Indigenous peoples depict time as cyclical as illustrated by the medicine wheel. This predominant use of the symbol of a circle representing interconnectedness in Indigenous epistemology contrasts with the Western linear adoption of hierarchy. Non-linear thinking is able to produce new ideas and understanding by thinking laterally or combining systems, putting different ideas together and creating new knowledge. The emphasis on relationality and relationships resembles ecosystem thinking. It contrasts with the Western scientific approach, which studies discrete parts of the external world by examining isolated variables.

Indigenous Knowledge and Teaching Methods

The Indigenous worldview has implications for the characteristics of Indigenous knowledge and methods of teaching. For example, knowledge is not assumed universal but contextual and personal. Sharing of knowledge is bound up in relationships in which the teacher assesses the seriousness and readiness of the learner. Knowledge is not something possessed but something that exists in relationship to others and other entities in the world. The method of teaching relies on the principle of non-interference or indirect

instruction. Knowledge is derived from experiential learning, which impacts methods of teaching. Learners are provided opportunities to experience things for themselves. Since there is no division between nature and culture, both are available as teachers. Indigenous languages prioritize action, and verbs come first. Experiential learning uses verb forms to discuss types of experience. In contrast, Western knowledge is noun-based, and stability or permanence resides in the object. In Indigenous knowledge and teaching, oral transmission is paramount and has as much power as written transmission. Storytelling is a primary mode of learning through narrative and connecting through the stories we share. As the medicine wheel demonstrates, Indigenous knowledge is holistic and focused on restoring balance. The sources of Indigenous knowledge also differ because they include not just content, but also traditional knowledge such as values and beliefs that are passed on from Elders. The sources of knowledge are much more empirical, being drawn from the experience of our senses and from traditional ecological knowledge. Finally, the sources of knowledge include revealed knowledge found in dreams, signs, fasting, and visions of purpose (Restoule, 2017). Lafever argues that this spiritual dimension is lacking from Western categorizations of knowledge, such as Bloom's taxonomy, which includes only cognitive, physical, and affective domains, whereas the Medicine Wheel includes all four (2016, p. 416).

Cautions/Considerations

ESL teachers must be careful to avoid decontextualizing Indigenous experience from history and also ensure they are avoiding the cultural appropriation of symbols, teachings, art, dress or any other relevant aspect. Moreover, one must recognize that while there are certain commonalities in an Indigenous worldview, Indigenous peoples are diverse and should not be depicted as a monolith. In sourcing materials, we should allow Indigenous people to speak for themselves and avoid speaking for them. In fact, we should consult with Indigenous colleagues and educators as a check on the integration of Indigenous material into our curriculum and invite them into our classrooms. Decolonization is not a metaphor but is a response to the historical reality of colonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Another challenge is the risk of "portraying Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal people as merely part of the multicultural mosaic in which everyone can partake and everyone is equal [which] belies the very violent colonial processes through which this land has become a 'multicultural nation'" (Dion, Johnston & Rice, 2010). The authors of the report warn against a diversity training approach, which emphasizes prejudice management rather than engaging in an analysis of how colonialism has created systemic inequality in Canadian society. A multicultural approach to oppression does not address Indigenous sovereignty or rights to self-determination. We must also be careful not to adopt a victimhood perspective, while still acknowledging the cultural and literal genocide inflicted by government policies such as Residential schools. For this reason, it is considered best not to begin with these topics. While avoiding the idealizing of Indigenous peoples in a romantic stereotype, we should recognize the contributions and sophistication of Indigenous civilizations, as well as critically examining the myths of civilization and progress that justify settler colonization and occupation of land.

Best Practices

I will conclude with some suggestions from several authors whom I have cited, along with some of my own, on ways to develop a Pedagogy for Reconciliation, a term coined by Jeremy Siemens (2017).

- Engage in Professional Development workshops facilitated by Indigenous facilitators to learn more about Indigenous history, issues, and worldviews; these should be mandatory for all educators.

- Compare mainstream and Indigenous views on historical and current events (Freeman et al., 2018)

- Privilege Indigenous authors and speakers in order to reverse the erasure of Indigenous voices and incorporate Indigenous cultures, histories and worldviews into the curriculum (Freeman et al., 2018)

- Make use of traditional talking circles (Abe, 2017; First Nations Pedagogy Online, 2009)

- Adopt storytelling, a fundamental Indigenous teaching approach, as a way to engage in language learning (Abe, 2017)

- Make explicit the power relationships in language. E.g. the use of the passive voice and present perfect to distance oneself from blame (Abe, 2017; Walsh-Marr, 2019)

- Identify values and assumptions or infer biases and motives in texts/culture (CLB outcomes as cited in Abe, 2017)

- Approach texts/textbooks with a critical eye (Abe, 2017)

- Examine what we know and how we know it (e.g. research methodology) and compare Western and Indigenous systems of knowledge-making

- Avoid binary oppositions: the tendency of Western thought to see the world or solutions to its problems as either/or dualities

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DECONSTRUCTING THE CULTURAL DIG: EXAMINING RYERSON'S REAL INSTITUTE SPEAKING PROJECT

By Catrina Ascenuik, Toronto, ON

Abstract

The Cultural Dig project, which is in its fourth year, has been the opportunity for students of the REAL Institute to showcase their work. The focus of this project has been for students to make connections to what they have learned throughout the year. These cultural "digs" give students the opportunity to reflect on their learning as well as their future educational and professional path while engaging with the Ryerson's general student body. Examining how this project was conceived, along with the rationale, the triumphs, and the struggles, for both students and teachers will be part of the discussion.

It is the final days of school, and students are getting ready for their final project. Dressed in business attire and with professionally designed posters in-hand, they march into the largest Ryerson building on Yonge St. and are about to complete their final assignment of the school year. They are nervous, yet they are ready to face their future peers, professors, and other community members.

Ryerson's Real Institute (RRI) EAP program has recently completed its 6th year and like many programs, there are certain challenges that were faced. The program is an academic preparation program for English language learners,

which runs for 8 months. The goal is to prepare students linguistically for their post-secondary studies. Like many programs, there has been a fair share of success and setbacks. Since the first cohort, RRI has been following its graduates and their progress over the course of their undergraduate degrees. The Real Institute invites the RRI alumni back to discuss their journey in post-secondary studies in Canada. There is also a follow-up with the departments that the students will enter once they have graduated from RRI. What emerged from these conversations was a concern with the students' ability to connect with the Ryerson community at large.

At the RRI, students are given a safe space to grow into the Canadian academic culture, but the difficulty is connecting them to the main campus. This is due to the nature of the EAP program and the location of the school, which is off the main campus. Like many EAP classes, there are 18-20 students who study together for 8 months at a time. Our goal is to help students explore the expectations of the university and to prepare them for what is to come. However, once they have graduated, they enter into their programs like any other first year students.

What is the 'Cultural Dig'?

The question we asked ourselves was, how can we bridge the gap between our EAP community and the general student population at Ryerson? Professors from other departments were concerned with the EAP graduates' ability to communicate with them even for the most basic exchanges. From their experience, the students had a difficult time engaging with their professors. There was difficulty with eye contact, and the encounters that did occur were often short and awkward.

When following up with our alumni, they also mentioned the difficulty they had with their professors and with their peers. They found group work and meeting people in their program who did not have the same L1 extremely challenging. The undergraduate experience was very lonely for them. Students felt ill-prepared to network, which they felt was a skill necessary for survival in both their studies and beyond.

My colleague Scott Eason and I came up with the idea of the Cultural Dig as the RRI's final project when we were looking to have our students engage more with their learning. We were working on the project from several angles. First, we wanted to connect the Ryerson community with our students. Our students had very little connection to their future programs except for a few who got the chance to take some credit courses, but this was not offered or accessible to all students. Second, we wanted to expose our students to what Ryerson had to offer and to give them an opportunity to engage with others outside of our program. Third, we wanted to showcase the abilities of our students to the Ryerson community at large in a space that would push our students to network but to do so in a somewhat controlled and safe environment.

The idea of the project was simple. Students were to present one aspect of a unit theme in a 'science fair' type event and highlight what they had learned throughout the course of the year. They were asked to connect what they had learned in a way in which this aspect might impact their lives in the future.

In our EAP program, we have curricular units that are content-based. Students would pick one aspect of one unit that they would research and use this as a platform to engage with the audience. We asked students to use their research as a way to connect with the audience. We emphasized that the Cultural Dig was NOT a presentation, but its focus was on networking. Students were taught presentation skills and networking skills to prepare for the event. The goal was to learn how to make connections with Ryerson community members who could become their future peers and professors.

Research and the Dig

When the Dig was first conceived, the project was not approached theoretically, but more from meeting an observed need at the time. In our EAP program, the workshops were divided into two separate courses: reading and writing, and listening and speaking. We found that students were not taking the listening and speaking workshops seriously. We also found that there was a lack of reflective practices especially in the listening and speaking curriculum. Most of our curriculum in speaking was focused on smaller tasks without a larger project. It was from there that we started the planning process of the Cultural Dig.

As time has passed, we have attempted to understand the project from a theoretical standpoint. Experiential learning has played a significant role in the curriculum at RRI. The Dig is based on Project-based Learning (PBL), an experiential approach based on 'learning by doing', where student experience has a significant impact on their learning process (Efstratia, 2014; Kolb, 1984). It is through this meaningful experience that students are using and developing their ability to problem solve, critique, analyze, assess, collaborate, and communicate amongst other skills (Barron, et. al., 1998; Lee & Lim, 2012; Moss & Van Duzer, 1998). However, most of the research to date has looked at the effect that PBL has had on students at the elementary school and high school level, but fewer studies have researched the effects that PBL could have on adult learners. The argument for PBL in adult learners stems from the fact that it encourages and gives students an opportunity to strengthen themselves in their preferred learning style (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998).

The Cultural Dig aligns with the PBL approach in that it is student-driven, realistic, and collaborative between students, teachers and administration (Thomas, 2000). Also, learning is scaffolded with skills and strategies, and what is produced through this learning are artifacts to be shown and shared (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2005).

Barriers to the Dig

The first year of the Dig, we had no idea how it was going to appear. The idea seemed like a simple one. Students were to have a poster presentation on what they had learned over the course of the semester. The idea was taken from the science fairs that we had experienced as elementary school students. As the Dig was being planned, we realized that there was much more planning needed in order for it to be effective, polished, and experiential for our students.

The Dig itself had many moving parts. In the beginning, it had taken more than a semester to set up and required the involvement of both the administration, coordinators, and all of the instructors in the program. Also, what was needed was a budget for rudimentary marketing material. Another issue with the Dig was the logistics of evaluating students. The nature of the Dig made it challenging to

have evaluations of students on the day of the event. There was a finite amount of time to evaluate many students, and the interactive nature of the event made it problematic if feedback was to be given in detail, especially considering how close to the university deadline grade submissions align with the day of the Dig. A third issue involved the audience. We wanted to ensure that participants would show up for our students. An integral part was to have students present in an interactive environment, so traffic was necessary on the day of the Dig.

Trouble-shooting the Dig

The project required coordination from both the administration and the teaching staff. The planning started at the beginning of the semester, and the Dig itself took place at the end. Students were asked to complete various tasks. First, they were asked to design a professional poster that represented their topic at the Dig. Though students were put into groups based on their topic, the Dig itself was done individually. Each aspect the student had chosen was unique as was their perspective.

In order to create a more streamlined process, the students had to plan the Dig in stages. The first stage involved a proposal. Students were put into groups based on the aspect of the module they had chosen, and they were asked to create a proposal that outlined how and what students were to present at the Dig. Once it was approved, students worked on several items: a group poster, an individual poster, and a pitch.

As a group, students had to create a poster that represented their group's unit theme. We gave students a session on how to build their posters and how to present themselves professionally. Individually, students had to create a visual that represented their aspect. The students had free range for their individual visual, which ranged from videos to infographics to objects, which were to be used as an aide. The only visuals students were not permitted to use were PPT or Prezi since students had ineffectively used those programs in the past during the Dig. In the weeks leading up to the Dig, the instructors had conferences with students individually and as a group, giving them feedback on their process. Several dry runs focusing on specific aspects of the Dig were held in class,

including a final practice with other classes acting as audience members. It is in that primary instance where teachers had the chance to assess the students. This was the opportunity for instructors to listen and watch the interaction in detail focusing on language points and varying aspects of presentation skills. On the day of the Dig, students were evaluated more holistically. Instructors looked to see that the students had come prepared, and that they were ready to engage with their audience.

In order to secure an audience, several measures were taken. The student support staff created an invitation/flyer that was sent out to all the departments at Ryerson. One to two days prior to the Dig, students were asked to canvas the campus and pitch to the community about coming to the Dig. The students were to create an elevator speech that would get the attention of a potential audience. Though students found this challenging, it reinforced skills that instructors had highlighted as being important for networking. Instructors emphasized the importance of body language (not only theirs but those of the people that they approached). Students were asked to think about who they should approach, what kinds of body language to look for, and how to deal with potential rejection. Students had to use the skills and strategies we had reviewed in class to approach strangers and to present themselves at the event.

To facilitate the event, the Student Learning Centre (SLC) was chosen as the location for the Dig. The SLC was ideal because it was located in the heart of downtown Toronto. Also, it contained the library, and connected various student services, which made it a building with heavy foot traffic. We had some incentives for potential participants, including complimentary refreshments and a chance to win one of the door prizes. During the Dig itself, classes had to rotate at times when they were presenting the Dig. Students who were not presenting were canvassing for the event. An MC also helped bring in more traffic. Students were required to dress professionally on the day. When they were brought an audience, students were asked to engage by presenting what they had learned over the course of the semester, while engaging with their audience members. The discussion revolved around where each participant came from, their particular position on the topic, and why their audience was at Ryerson.

At present, four iterations of the Cultural Dig have been curated, and responses from the audience and students have been overwhelmingly positive. Many of the audience members had never heard of the Real Institute and reported that they were impressed by the professionalism of the students. The faculty who attended the Dig found that it was a great opportunity for them to understand the mission of the Real Institute. For the students, they also felt this experience was rewarding. They enjoyed the process of reflection over the course of the year planning this process. Though they were nervous about presenting in front of such an audience, they felt they had learned from the experience. Some of the students reported that they could tell the difference between an audience member who was truly engaged and one who was there simply for the food or the potential to win a prize. They felt honoured that their future professors and the President of Ryerson were present at the Dig; the prospect of entering their regular programs in the fall seemed less intimidating. What was most surprising was how this event brought together individual classes, instructors, and administration. Though the process had its challenges, the Dig created a community working together for one purpose. It is for these reasons why the Real Institute continues to push for this project every year.

Implications for Future Digs

Like every project we have at the Real Institute, there is consistent development in ways to make the Dig more productive and more effective. At the end of each year, the Dig is reviewed by the instructors on how it can be improved.

Improvements can be made in several ways. First, it is important that concrete feedback from our students and our participants is considered. Due to the timing of the Dig, it has been a challenge, which we hope to change in the future with student and audience surveys. Second, we hope to continuously create a process that is simpler than the one we have currently. After the second Cultural Dig, it was understood that it is most effective to have a teacher and administrator who acted as lead to help facilitate any communication or deadlines that needed to be met. This was due to the size of the program and the amount of coordination a project like this requires. Third, though it was emphasized throughout the preparation process that networking and making connections with the audience

were the goals, it was a challenge to have them move away from a presentation to having a conversation with an audience member. For the future, the idea of networking should be addressed much earlier in the semester so that students can become more comfortable with this skill. It is important for teachers to reinforce the networking aspect by moving away from materials that are more presentation-based.

Final Thoughts

When we initially created this project, we had no idea the impact that it would have on our program. We went from making it a small project to embedding the skills and strategies for the Dig as being central to our curriculum. We are pleased that the project has grown and evolved, and we hope to continue to create similar projects that give students the confidence for their future studies and careers.

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USING ART TO INCORPORATE CULTURE INTO THE ESL CLASSROOM

By Mahgol Izadi & Joumana Baltagi, Toronto, ON

Abstract

This article introduces strategies for enhancing multi-cultural understanding and promoting discussion of culture in the ESL classroom through music and the arts in academic English classrooms. The authors look at some examples on how contemporary song lyrics and art forms, including body language, can be used to not only review language concepts, but to initiate socio-cultural related discussions that encourage cross-cultural learning. The authors share their experiences while drawing on some of the pragmatic approaches they have successfully implemented in their academic programs.

There is a lot of research that supports the idea of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. One reason why it is a good idea to incorporate culture into language learning is that it provides students with intrinsic motivation to study the language by creating a positive learning environment through the integration of language and culture (Engh, 2013). Another reason is that socio-cultural competence enhances linguistic competence and makes it easier for learners to understand the language and become better communicators (Arevalo, 2010). They are better able to understand the subtle differences in intercultural norms between socio-cultural groups and make connections to their own culture,

which in turn helps avoid stereotypes and build stronger relationships with other cultures (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002).

So why choose art as a medium to introduce culture into the ESL classroom? Much of what happens in a foreign classroom, from interactions at the door to choices of clothing in winter months to discussing interests and dietary preferences, is informed by how we use our five senses to connect to and understand the world around us. We receive imagery, hear sounds, use silence as inspiration, compare cultural tastes, and express our perceptions about colour. It is in this space and through these experiences that we feel the inevitable connection between culture and art. At times, we practise art subconsciously, and at other times, we allow it to take centre stage in our daily expressions. This is precisely why we find it to be not only an essential part of culture that helps in understanding its history, essence and growth, but it is also a useful tool in engaging the students in the classroom.

Having come to Canada from different backgrounds ourselves, we understand the journey of adaptation, internalization, and eventually enjoyment that immigration embodies. We also believe that our identities evolve through living both an individual and a collective journey as a part of learning the customs, culture, and language of the country. Art preserves and shapes our connection to culture, and culture in turn informs and feeds art through the passing of time. As a result, we bring into the classroom our own understandings stemming from smaller communities such as family, school, and friends. For this reason, teaching culture through art is not only relevant but also a realistic and practical way to stream the classroom with the outside world. Considering Howard Gardner (2006) and the significance of multiple intelligences, the inclusion of art and the discussions around it will facilitate a learning environment where the learners feel valuable and confident both as learners and as individuals.

Over the course of our teaching careers, we have used different forms of artistic expression, and have found music, creative writing, and visual art to be the most effective and inspiring to our students. There are several reasons why using music and/or songs may be a good medium for introducing elements of culture or initiating culture-related discussions in the classroom. One reason is that it

contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere, which in turn lowers the affective filter, according to Krashen's theory of second language acquisition; it thereby facilitates learning and makes it more enjoyable, and it also appeals to auditory learners and takes into account not only linguistic intelligence, but musical intelligence and interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Engh, 2013).

Moreover, some researchers believe that processing musical structures can lead to enhanced neuro-cognitive functioning because it enables more complex thinking (Engh, 2013; Ayuthaya, 2018). Finally, songs are an authentic source of language (Arevalo, 2010), and they can provide insight into not only the specific slang, idioms, and vocabulary of other cultures but also the habits and customs of different societies and cultures (Ayuthaya, 2018). Furthermore, song lyrics can help improve listening skills, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary retention especially through repetition and catchy phrases and beats, or what Murphey referred to as "the song stuck in my head phenomenon" (Murphey, 1990).

In general, contemporary songs and music can be used in different ways to introduce and teach culture. Teachers may use specific lyrics of a song to teach aspects of the target language culture such as slang, idioms, values, or beliefs related to specific cultures. For example, the pop song "Life" by Desree from 1998 may be used to introduce superstitions in western culture and invite students to discuss various superstitions in their own cultures. Alternatively, the overall theme of a song may be used to discuss related socio-cultural issues in the students' own cultures. For example, "Another Day" in Paradise by Phil Collins from 1989 or "The A Team" by Ed Sheeran from 2011 may be used to generate discussion about social issues such as homelessness and drug addiction and other socio-cultural problems specific to the students' cultures. "Price tag" by Jessie J from 2011 can be contrasted with Sia's song "Cheap Thrills" from 2016 to get the students to explore the importance of money versus happiness in their respective cultures (the cultural aspect of achievement versus quality of life), and so on.

Another way of bringing cultural discussion into the classroom through music is to play different genres of songs (country/RnB/pop/blues) and have student work in groups to compare and contrast the varied socio-cultural issues discussed in different genres. Also, using music videos where students can see the singers,

their hairstyles, their clothes, as well as their environment, enables them to better understand the culture of the pop music of the time and may generate some interesting discussion about the singers' backgrounds and the culture of people from a particular time period. Music videos from different time periods may be compared and discussed. At more advanced levels of English language teaching, the teacher may ask the students to find an English song with a cultural theme they would like to discuss in class, or they may assign a theme for which students have to find a song to discuss in groups. In a multicultural class, teachers may also ask each student to bring a native song from his/her own country in order to introduce their culture or an aspect of their culture to other classmates in English.

The connection between art and culture can also be expressed through verbal or written language. There are numerous creative activities teachers can use to engage the students in the process of learning about culture. These range from theatre warmup activities, language through dramatic performance, vocabulary games, short stories, and documentaries made by students. One concept that has been researched, compiled, and even illustrated, is the hidden cultural meaning of words. This refers to the untranslatable: words or short phrases we use that carry cultural significance and are often difficult to express using a single word or group of words in other languages. In order to explain what they mean, we may find ourselves miming, storytelling, or drawing, and even then, the meaning may not be as clearly expressed or understood. This is because we attempt to do so from a source language expressing one culture into a target language that expresses another culture (Dickins, 2012).

These words portray the actions, feelings, abstract concepts, or physical description of objects. For instance, saudade in Portuguese can be translated into 'longing for a person or place', but at times, the person or object is lost and at times only missed. There are times when the word can describe a profound nostalgic moment of remembering. Another example is the Japanese word tsundoku meaning leaving a book unread after purchasing it, but this word also hints at the book being piled up with other unread books one hopes to read one day. Such words, among many others that cannot be explained using one word in English, are explored in Howard Rheingold's book They Have a Word for it

(1998) and Guy Deutscher's Through the Language Glass (2010); there are also beautifully illustrated books such as Ella Frances Sanders's Lost in Translation: An Illustrated Compendium of Untranslatable Words from Around the World (2014).

Discussing these opens doors to learning about other cultures not only for learners, but also for teachers. That is why we found it to be an effective and engaging activity to do in our workshop at TESL Toronto's Spring Conference 2019. The results were fascinating as adult educators engaged in group discussions explaining concepts from their childhood, cultures, and language groups with which they associated.

Another activity that stretches the imagination is using words associated with tangible objects to describe abstract or intangible concepts such as friendship, love, or fame and giving each concept a colour. This creative writing exercise is useful for expanding vocabulary, and as previously discussed, using the five senses to explain how we connect to the world around us. A big part of our perceptions about fame, friendship, or love is informed by our upbringing and acculturation and our personal outlooks on life. In this activity, the students are asked to describe a word, such as love, by stating what it is, what it tastes like, what it sounds like, what it feels like, and by giving it a colour. As it may be inferred, many people see love as red and use soft or emotional words to describe it, but it is interesting to have an occasional student describing it as blue or green and stating, for instance, that it tastes like an apple instead of cotton candy. The students in a lower level class can also benefit from this activity by miming the ideas or looking the word up in a dictionary, of course depending on the teacher's practices and approach to language learning. This brings us to the very important element of colour perception and whether or not it is a universal concept. As Surrallés (2016) argues, while there are some universals in human perception, colour terms are not among them. Cultures define colours differently ranging from positive and negative associations to grouping words into colour categories or describing the colour of things using descriptive words rather than what we know as burgundy or taupe or light blue. In addition, colours express symbolism and values of a culture, which inform how we see the world and what meaning we attach to the objects, food, and concepts around us.

As a result, when learning culture and language through art, we can see the importance of communicating those differences that shape our vision and influence our perception and internalization of art. Why is one genre superior? What do we deem to be aesthetically beautiful? What would we pay for or frame and display in our homes? Do our education systems value art or prefer science? These are all questions that can be discussed in class by looking at an array of artwork ranging from famous paintings and online blogs to magazine advertisements and images of gourmet foods. A group discussion encourages the students to discuss all of the previously mentioned cultural aspects and explain why they feel a certain way about a style, technique, colour, idea, or message in the art form. Students can be given adjectives to describe qualities or flavours, and for the following class, students can be given an assignment to present one form of art from their countries and elaborate on the historical, cultural, or social significance of it. They are also encouraged to express their personal interest or lack thereof.

Undoubtedly, there are limitations in both using art forms and incorporating culture into the ESL classroom that may affect the pace of the class, individual connection to the work, and interpersonal communication. Overall, the students' age groups and levels should be considered, and the assignments should be adjusted accordingly. The biggest limitation we have found is time constraints and finding space to accommodate art and culture-related activities within the academic curriculum. Furthermore, the material used might not be of interest to the students, and there may be a danger of cultural stereotyping or cultural imperialism. It is important to be aware of these limitations and make appropriate changes when required. For example, activities, may be adjusted depending on whether you have a monocultural or multicultural class, and a specific short time could be allotted to do only a part of the activity as a warm-up or wrap-up if class time and subject do not permit. Overall, despite the limitations, incorporating elements of art and creative forms of expression not only facilitate learning about culture, but they create an environment where all opinions are valued and heard.

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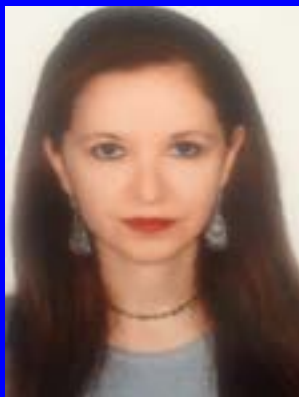
THE CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOMS: A CONSIDERATION OF INTERCULTURAL CURRICULA

By Alanna Carter, Toronto, ON

Abstract

In this paper, the need for intercultural curricula in the Canadian context is discussed. The relevance of this discussion is based on the significant number of international students choosing Canada as a place to study and live. Given the importance of language competence to success in post-secondary education and adjustment to Canadian society, development of students' language skills is a high stakes goal as many of these students aspire to advanced post-secondary schooling at colleges and universities. Additionally, there is a need for English language teachers to create classroom settings where students from all cultural backgrounds are safe and comfortable and that reflect the culturally diverse classrooms that are a reality in Canadian schools and educational settings. In this paper, the challenges and strengths of intercultural curricula will be explored. Finally, three classroom activities designed to facilitate an intercultural curriculum in a multicultural language classroom will be recommended.

Introduction

The internationalization and multicultural character of Canada are affecting both the content and delivery of educational and language programs. As

students learn, live, and work to become global citizens, the need for programs and curricula that reflect culture and diversity will only continue to grow. An intercultural curriculum, defined as a planned program of study with intentional inclusion of culturally-diverse content and a culturally-safe learning environment that fosters cognitive and affective learning (Mestenhauser, 1983; Shenk, Moore & Davis, 2004), is suggested as a response to this need. The reasons for this are that such a curriculum engages students' thinking, prompts reflection, and promotes dialogue about various cultural perspectives. Such curricula also facilitate students' development of understanding and respect for their own cultures as well as others' cultures. This curricular approach is particularly relevant as Canada continues to recruit more international students and mobilize Canadian-born students to engage in education in international settings.

While the above is affecting educators who teach in varied subject areas, particularly affected are those teachers who teach language. The challenges and strengths of teaching language to a diverse group of learners as well as three practical strategies for facilitating the process of learning language in a classroom characterized by cultural diversity will be presented in this paper.

Although educators face challenges of all kinds in their work, the greatest challenges for a teacher who works with international students are often related to language acquisition and cultural diversity. Learning a language is never easy; moreover, difficulties related to language can be compounded in the context of a culturally diverse classroom where others have the same goal but differing learning styles and varied cultural backgrounds. The challenges and complexity of this situation are explored in the next section of this paper.

The Culturally Diverse Classroom: Challenges

Although all students in an ESL classroom share a common goal—to learn and use English—achieving this goal is often difficult and time consuming. Like any classroom, students in an ESL classroom have personal goals that they are working towards, and they must fit these goals within the scope of the course. The hugely diverse population of students in an ESL classroom, however, can

present challenges for both students and teachers.

Each person learns a language differently and in light of their own abilities, experiences, and preferences. Lightbrown and Spada (2006) examined a number of variables that affect how a person learns a language. Of particular interest within the context of this paper is their discussion of learning styles, personality, and identity and ethnic group affiliation. Regarding learning styles, they point out that every student has a preferred learning style and that there is no one correct way to learn—or, by extension, teach—a language (p. 59). In addition, language learners from different countries may have different preferred learning styles. Further, a number of personality traits, including introversion and extroversion, anxiety, self-esteem, empathy, dominance, talkativeness, and responsiveness, have been studied in connection with language learning. Although the research does not show a clearly defined relationship between personality and language learning, many language instructors suggest that personality does affect language development. Linking this to culture, it is likely that a student who comes from a culture that strongly discourages making mistakes will fear doing so in the classroom, and therefore, refuse to take language risks. Identity and ethnic group affiliation also play an important role in a person's language development. A person from a minority group learning a majority group language may have different attitudes and motivations than a person from a majority group learning a minority language (p. 65). Learners from some ethnic groups, perhaps more than others, may be more willing to learn a language based on how they are perceived, or feel they are perceived, in the community.

By comparison, the literature on culturally diverse classrooms is characterized by a cross-section of concepts, all of which are relevant to this discussion. These concepts include but are not limited to cultural awareness, cultural competence, culturally responsive teaching, intercultural competence, intercultural curriculum, and hidden curriculum. While each term could be considered on its own, the breadth of this work is beyond the limitations of this paper. Sharing some key ideas though is both possible and appropriate.

An outsider's experience of culture typically falls along a continuum ranging from awareness and knowledge to competence within the culture and when interacting

with the members of a particular culture. Ideally, for example, a teacher who is teaching English to a class of students from Korea aspires to be competent in the group's culture to create a supportive and trusting learning environment where language development occurs. However, when the class is composed of learners from different cultures who speak different languages, the challenge of interculturality manifests. In this context, the teacher needs to strive for learning experiences that are meaningful, respectful, and effective for all members of the class. According to Smith (1983), an intercultural curriculum is the desired model because it acknowledges the differences and the commonalities between and among cultures and, in an ESL classroom, languages. Smith's recognition of the intercultural curriculum as distinct from multicultural and cross-cultural curricula is significant. Most importantly, an intercultural curriculum encompasses more than other cultures and diverse groups of people; it also serves to promote an understanding of and response to one's own culture. As noted above, an intercultural curriculum involves the intentional programming of culturally-diverse and safe content and instruction to encourage learning (Mestenhauser, 1983; Shenk, Moore & Davis, 2004). Lastly, such a curriculum enables students from different disciplinary and work backgrounds to broaden their perspectives and respond to cultural diversity (INTER-Project, 2007; Yershova, DeJaeghere & Mestenhauser, 2000). Certainly, an intercultural curriculum plays an important role in an ESL classroom where the culture and language of students is diverse. Learning about others and about one's self facilitates the language learning process in positive ways and contributes to students' understandings of their own and others' languages and cultural values. Activities to promote understanding of the self and of others will be offered later in this article.

Although an intercultural curriculum is desirable, it can be difficult to put into practice. One particular challenge that heavily impacts how an intercultural curriculum functions is the hidden curriculum (Egbo, 2009, p. 9). The term hidden curriculum refers to unstated assumptions or rules that are in play in the classroom but not necessarily articulated in a course, program, or institution. Students learn the unofficial rules about power and structure in order to succeed in the academic environment. For example, there is the unacknowledged

assumption that we learn from experts and that the knowledge that teachers present is valuable (Jones & Young, 1997). In the context of an ESL classroom, the teacher, as an English speaker, holds tremendous power over students who have limited linguistics capabilities and who may struggle to effectively and easily communicate; the teacher's knowledge of English is highly valued and desired by students. There may also be the issue of the dominance by one cultural sub-group within the class: perhaps, for example, there may be members of a culture in the class who are more verbal than students from other cultures who are in the same class. The former may inhibit the participation of the latter. Furthermore, there is sometimes the challenge of cultural groups who may not respect each other and, therefore, affect the learning of all in the classroom. It is important for the teacher to recognize these types of situations and to navigate them appropriately and sensitively; this paper will offer practical suggestions and activities for how to do this.

The Culturally Diverse Classroom: Strengths

While the development and delivery of an intercultural curriculum is no small task, there are many recommendations to assist educators engaged in the development and delivery of courses and programs with an intercultural focus. The following provides insights into what is involved in an intercultural curriculum.

It is necessary to acknowledge that culture and the learning of language are complex realities; therefore, it is vital for the teacher to be aware of and sensitive to the following: race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, nation of origin, age, immigration experiences, physical/mental ability, and other key cultural elements. Understanding of and sensitivity to these elements of students' backgrounds are necessary for instructors to create a classroom environment where students feel welcome, understood, and safe. At times, it may be necessary for instructors to directly and openly acknowledge these realities for themselves by taking active steps to learn a more about students' backgrounds. A simple but meaningful way that instructors can become more familiar with students' backgrounds is by asking students questions about themselves and their experiences. Students are often open and glad to share

information about themselves with the instructor and, by extension, their classmates. A classroom environment, which encourages openness will be more comfortable and interesting for all members of the class; additionally, instructors can better connect with their students, understand how they approach the learning experience, and identify factors beyond the classroom that may help or hinder student success. At other times, however, implicit understanding of these realities is sufficient and appropriate.

Furthermore, culture and language should be explored through the voices and perspectives of many individuals including those in the classroom as well as people outside the classroom who share their experiences in stories, memoirs, films, and other forms or representations. These individuals include political figures and artists. By ensuring the experiences of many are respected and shared, student interest and participation increase and course content and delivery are enriched. Including students in a safe learning environment helps them learn about their own and others' cultural identities as well as develop respect for culture generally and specifically. Through the fostering of safe learning environments, teachers ensure that students feel comfortable and included; such settings are essential to student success.

With respect to the hidden curriculum, critical thinking is necessary to expose potential hidden elements of a curriculum, assumptions about culture, and marginalization. Curriculum developers, instructors, and students alike need to engage in critical thinking activities to better understand how the hidden curriculum is at work. All groups have a responsibility to break down barriers that prohibit some students from accessing and excelling within a particular cultural context. Curriculum developers should carefully examine materials for cultural biases and ensure that materials are fully and properly explained as well as accessible. Instructors need to acknowledge the hidden curriculum that exists within any curriculum and facilitate student awareness of the unseen, and often unspoken, elements that are required for academic success. Finally, students hold a certain responsibility for making sure that they are actively trying to understand how the classroom functions. Increased critical thinking by all parties results in an improved teaching and learning experience.

In addition to ensuring that materials are well developed, curriculum developers and language instructors should always work to include multiple examples and activities in lessons. This awareness is especially important in an intercultural classroom. Examples and activities need to be varied, interesting, and meaningful for students. Examples need to be deliberate, culturally relevant, and accessible. Further, constructivist learning approaches where students learn from and with each other are recommended whenever possible (Freedman, 1998; Leonard, 2002). Constructivist learning involves recognizing the context where students learn as well as the attitudes and beliefs that students hold. Students should be encouraged to reflect on how their own biases and views affect their learning and understanding.

Fluidity, or culturally responsive teaching, is critical in the planning of classes and programs of study. Scaffolding of learning is highly recommended to ensure that individual students and the class as a whole are progressing (Pea, 2004). Through scaffolding, students see progression and a clear path toward reaching their goals. Students feel comfortable and safe working through a well-planned and closely connected series of lessons. Effective scaffolding is essential for student success, particularly when learning language. While intercultural teaching requires fluidity, pre-established learning outcomes are vitally important. To paraphrase a line from Alice in Wonderland, one cannot know that he or she has arrived if the destination has not been clearly delineated in advance (Carroll, 2009). Assessment is necessary to ensure that appropriate progress is being made, and it offers validation for both instructors and students.

Thinking Strategically: Strategies that Work in the Intercultural Second Language Class

Knowledge of an intercultural classroom is not enough for a teacher. Instead, teachers need a repertoire of activities and specific strategies to support the development and maintenance of an intercultural classroom. In this section, three classroom activities that can be used in an ESL classroom to promote interculturality and language development are presented.

Activity #1: Stereotypes

First, activities that address stereotypes about cultural groups are particularly eye opening for students. Although some instructors may be hesitant to bring this topic into their classrooms, purposefully discussing the oversimplified ideas that we hold about each other is extremely powerful and engaging. Discussing stereotypes helps students to learn about how they might be perceived, but it also allows students to respond to the stereotypes that others hold about them. Students can offer comments and corrections thereby helping others to build a more accurate and fuller understanding of different cultures, which contributes to a respectful classroom and learning environment. This improved understanding of cultures will extend outside the classroom as well. To comfortably begin a discussion of stereotypes, ask students to list stereotypes they have about Canadians and make clarifications and corrections as necessary. Then, discuss the stereotypes that students have about each other. Students are sometimes surprised by the stereotypes that other people have about their cultural group, and they should be encouraged to respond to these stereotypes in order to teach their classmates about their culture. As mentioned, this kind of discussion is useful for students to better understand each other and to consider how they are perceived by others. In all, students develop a deeper understanding of both their own cultural group and other cultural groups.

Activity #2: Teach Your Language

A second activity that promotes interculturality is a teach your language activity. For this activity, students are put into mixed language groups, and each group has a leader and an assigned language. The leader of the group is responsible for teaching their group members five words in their language related to a particular topic (for example, the names of five animals, body parts, or colours). Then, the group teaches the entire class the five words in their assigned language. Students who do not actually know how to speak the assigned language are teaching other students words in a different language. For example, a Korean-speaking student helps teach the class five words in Italian. This is a useful activity for two reasons: it promotes language awareness, and students learn about each other in a personal way. The leader of the group is given an opportunity to share the

language with classmates and experience a sense of power in their position as teacher. Moreover, the leader develops a greater awareness of his or her language and how best to share it with classmates. Likewise, the students who learn the new languages develop a greater understanding of the person who speaks the language and may reflect on their pre-existing assumptions about particular languages.

Activity #3: Presentations on Countries and Cultures

A final activity that promotes an intercultural curriculum is having students create and do presentations about aspects of their cultures and countries. Students are generally pleased to do this activity and share beautiful pictures and interesting information about important places, foods, music, and customs in their countries and lives. Although some students feel nervous about doing their presentations, they often far exceed the required time limit because they are proud to be sharing their countries and cultures with their classmates. Students always have many questions for each other about their cultures. They often realize that, although they live on opposite sides of the world, their lives and values are deeply connected.

Final Thoughts

The experience of teaching language in a diverse cultural classroom is daunting and exciting. As globalization becomes the norm rather than the exception, there is no question about it: we must learn to communicate, work with, learn from, and socialize with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, this should happen in a context of respect and openness. The intercultural second language classroom is an ideal place to prepare students for this connected and increasingly open world.

At the same time, the need for support for teachers who work in such classrooms is critical. Employers need to appreciate the complexities involved in language instruction and enable teachers through relevant professional development opportunities and adequate resources. As an example, there are new technologies available that are showing real value in the second language classroom. Virtual

classrooms where students assume an avatar and interact in a 3D virtual space have been reported to show promise with language learners who may be shy to speak in the face-to-face classroom and in role-playing situations that could involve cross-cultural interactions. Such resources need to be investigated and possibly made available to teachers to employ with their students. While the face-to-face classroom will always be central to language learning, there are technologies and strategies that can be used to enhance the process and support teachers and students.

In closing, intercultural classrooms are places of energy and challenge. If educators bring personal and professional energy to these settings, further energy and, of course, learning will be the outcomes. Indeed, 21st century classrooms cannot afford to be anything less. Supports for the intercultural classroom should be a priority as geographic boundaries become less significant and classrooms become increasingly diverse. Opportunities for students of the world to meet, understand each other, and work together are paramount to achieving goals within and beyond the language classroom.

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