CONTACT

March 2023

The Conference Issue

Multimodality-enhanced teaching: Fostering global citizenship and intercultural competence in ELT PLUS Adapting teaching materials for L2 pragmatics instruction AND MORE...

TESL Ontario

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IN THIS ISSUE

Armelion. Spiral staircase. (2015). [Photo]. https://pixabay.com/photos/spiral-staircase-stairs-877834/

TESL Ontario Calendar of Events

April
- *April 4 — TESL Dialogue: PFL to 4L: What Does the L Really Mean? Let's Talk Literacy!*
- *April 23 — Having Fun and Teaching IELTS Reading*
- *April 26 — Working with Adult ELL Students with Undiagnosed Learning Disabilities, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Webinar Series*

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- *May 17 — Cultivating Trauma-Informed Spaces in Education, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Webinar Series*

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- *June 3 — TESL Dialogue: Online Engagement Strategies for Adult Learners*

July
- *July 11— TESL Dialogue: Cultivating a Culture of Academic Integrity*
- *July 26 — EAP Practitioners in Canada, Colleges and Universities Committee Webinar Series*

Editor's Note

Happy Spring, everyone! I think it is safe to say winter is over…?

I have just a completed a trip to Bangkok where I attended the 2023 APAIE (Asia-Pacific Association for International Education) Conference—thousands of delegates, from around the world, spread out through the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre. It was a refreshing opportunity to meet and network with many others from around the world—unversities, colleges, agencies, businesses, etc.

Welcome to the start of Volume 49 of Contact magazine. This issue includes the Spotlight and some of the great presentations from the TESL Ontario 2022 Virtual Conference, and more. In the Spotlight this issue is Raj Bhandari—TESL Ontario 2022 Virtual Conference presenter (*Integrating web-based formative assessment in test preparation courses*). Raj is a first-year PhD student in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University and co-founder and instructor at Komon.

For articles this time around, Heejin Song and Jacqueline Ng look at learning tasks that embrace learners' linguistic and cultural diversity; this advances learners' oral communication skills, promotes global citizenship, and cultivate intercultural competence. Alex Ross explores adapting teaching materials for L2 pragmatics instruction. Ameni Benali investigates second and foreign language teachers' knowledge, practices, and beliefs about writing assessment and the role of teacher education in improving teachers' writing assessment literacy. Ivana Stanisavljevic provides a personal account on first language, cultural identity, and English language teaching. Mostafa Kosari presents a discussion of what professionalism means in the workplace and how it can shape the relationship between the employees and the employee-employer relationship. And Andreia Arai-Rissman looks at learner variability in EAP classes.

Thank you to everyone for sharing your work, ideas, personal accounts, and passions. I hope everyone enioys the Spring issue, and see you again in the summer.

Thank you for reading. Take care.

-Nicola Carozza
editor@teslontario.org

CONTACT

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Spotlight — Raj Bhandari

You presented at the 2022 TESL Ontario Conference (*Integrating web-based formative assessment in test preparation courses*). What is web-based formative assessment and why and how did it grab your attention originally?

I believe that assessing learners' language abilities is an essential part of language learning and teaching. In order to ensure success in language education, language educators must recognize the gap between what students are capable of and what they need to know to complete a task successfully. Observing and comparing a student's performance helps teachers identify this gap and tailor future lessons accordingly. How can we do that? The answer is formative assessment. Formative assessment is used to identify learning gaps and assess learners' ongoing progress throughout a class or course. A web-based formative assessment tool is an online platform that allows teachers to create engaging assignments in web media. Some popular web-based formative assessment platforms are Classkick, Formative, Nearpod, and Socrative. My exploration of the benefits of web-based formative assessment was prompted by the transition from face-to-face to remote teaching following COVID-19.

You are a first-year PhD student in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University. In your view, what's the relationship between these two disciplines and what do you hope to focus on in your PhD career?

Put simply, languages in society are the focus of both Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies as separate disciplines. Why separate them? The graduate program in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies is a unique approach to bringing the two disciplines together. In my cohort, I have colleagues from both a pure Applied Linguistics background, like me, and also colleagues from a Discourse Studies background. To me, this combination provides rich learning experiences and broadens the scope of research avenues. Talking about my doctoral research, I am interested in exploring learner beliefs about technology integration in language teaching and learning. In particular, I plan to investigate learners' beliefs about web-based formative assessments.

Raj Bhandari is a first-year PhD student in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University. He has a master's degree in Applied Linguistics and has been teaching English since 2010, both in-person and online. His research interests include technology-mediated language learning and teaching, second language assessment, and corrective feedback.

There are many technological tools available to educators. Maybe even so much to the point of it being overwhelming to know what to use. What's your advice for navigating technology tools, what to use, how to use them, etc. in the classroom for novice and experienced teachers?

I read an article titled *Not more technology, but more effective technology* during my MA program. This title emphasizes the key aspect of technology integration in language education: effectiveness. In my opinion, language educators should analyze both the affordances and limitations of any EdTech tool they plan to incorporate into their teaching. When considering using any EdTech tool, I always ask myself: Why do I need this tool? Does it fit my teaching context? How will it help me and my students? Will students like it? Do they have to pay for a subscription? Whenever I integrate a new tool into my classroom, I find it useful to analyze learners' perceptions about that tool before continuing to use it. It is also very important to find

out what the tool developer's data privacy policy is so that learners' privacy is protected. Also be sure to pay attention to how intuitive the tool is; to me, it should be user-friendly and easy to use.

As co-founder and instructor at Komon, what distinguishes Komon from other services and businesses?

I would not call Komon a business; it is just a platform acting as a bridge between a learner and an instructor. We—three colleagues of mine and I—founded Komon in April 2020 shortly after the first lockdown was implemented primarily to provide online test preparation services to learners in Canada and Nepal. Since we were teaching online, our service wasn't/isn't geographically restricted; we get learners from different countries. A unique aspect of Komon is that its instructors are real test takers who have first-hand experience of taking the tests they teach. So, they know what skills are required to ace the test and how to build, develop, and master those skills.

There is a stress attributed to many, if not all, formal assessments that candidates experience. Whether it be the IELTS, CELPIP, the SAT, what advice do you have for test preparation instructors to help them assist their students in navigating the uncertainty and anxiety they feel when preparing for a test? Is there another way of looking at test preparation?

I recommend avoiding 'teaching to the test' as much as possible. The reason I said 'as much as possible' is that I know it can be a challenging task in some circumstances. To me, test preparation courses should focus on teaching students the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) necessary to perform well on tests and achieve desired results. Instructors should therefore identify activities that will equip students with the needed KSAs. To minimize the anxiety they feel when preparing for a test, it is crucial for learners to set a goal first and then understand the test requirements, content, format, and weighting of the sections of the test. It is crucial that instructors familiarize students with the test's structure and content. Our main goal as instructors should be to focus on the language skills the test measures and plan/design our lesson/course accordingly.

What are your future goals when it comes to language, assessment, and your career overall?

At this point, I am focused on completing my PhD coursework and progressing with my research. In my role

as an applied linguist and a language educator, I strive to constantly improve classroom instruction and assessment and explore ways to incorporate technology into the classroom. It will always be my priority to keep up with the latest developments in teaching techniques. Working towards my PhD, I aim to continue to lead research projects to inform classroom curricula and share my findings with the academic and professional communities.

If you would like to know more about Raj Bhandari, please visit his LinkedIn page and Komon. To get in contact, Raj can be reached at rajbhandari@cmail.carleton.ca.

Thank you once again, Raj!

Multimodality-enhanced teaching: Fostering global citizenship and intercultural competence in ELT

By Heejin Song & Jacqueline Ng, York University, Canada

Introduction

This article showcases multimodality-enhanced learning tasks that embrace learners' linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset to advance their oral communication skills, promote global citizenship (UNESCO, 2018), and cultivate intercultural competence (Byram, 1996) in a university English communication course. Drawing upon Cummins' (2009) transformative multiliteracies pedagogy and García's (2009) translanguaging that highlight affirming diversity and acknowledging a fluid flow of 'languaging' (Swain, 2006) in transnationals' language learning as a source of empowerment in teaching, we exemplify two innovative multimodal projects called *My Cooking Show* and *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression Corner*. These projects invited learners to activate and share their prior cultural and linguistic knowledge base with the aim of developing their cross-cultural and cross-linguistic awareness, English communication skills, and interdisciplinary academic literacies. These tasks encouraged learners to use appropriate linguistic and paralinguistic elements relevant to the task genre. To be more specific, in *My Cooking Show*, learners were encouraged to use sequencing discourse markers for giving cooking instructions and utilize affective linguistic and paralinguistic features to amplify knowledge and attachment to the dish. In *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression Corner*, learners were encouraged to explore English colloquial and idiomatic expressions through multimodal, plurilingual and intercultural exploration. This research-informed teaching practice implies pedagogical potential to foster learners' development of intercultural competence and growth as inclusive global citizens building a strong sense of global connectedness and belonging.

Connecting theory and practice to inform new pedagogical initiatives via critical action research

Our teaching and research context is situated in a credit-bearing undergraduate English for academic purposes (EAP) communication course where we are both course directors and action researchers. The

main objective of the course is to facilitate learners' development of oral communication skills and academic literacies essential for their academic success in university and beyond. Students enrolled in this course use English as a second or additional language. Student demographics represent relatively diverse cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds with most of the students in the course from Asian ethnic backgrounds.

The theoretical concepts that guide our pedagogical innovations and inspiring our teaching practice to be multimodality-enhanced comprise inclusive global citizenship (UNESCO, 2018), intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1996), and multiliteracies and translingual pedagogy (Cummins, 2009; García 2009). UNESCO's (2018) inclusive global citizenship stresses learners' development of attitudes toward inclusive global identity, knowledge of global issues, and creative and critical cognitive skills, as well as collaborative social skills. Inseparable and pivotal to acquire these tenets to be inclusive global citizens is developing and utilizing intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Learners with ICC are able to bring the culture of their origin and other cultures into relation with one another and actively demystify biased cultural assumptions and advance knowledge of their own and others' cultures and become culturally inclusive and responsive communicators with others. Furthermore, Cummins' (2009) transformative multiliteracies pedagogy and García's (2009) translanguaging emphasize the importance of creating a pedagogical space and instructional design where pluricultural and plurilingual learners' multiliteracies engagement and fluid expressions of translanguaging are optimized. These pedagogical concepts urge EAP teaching practitioners to rethink and restructure conventional approaches to teaching (e.g., top-down instructions, teacher-centric, Anglo-centric onto-epistemology oriented teaching) in order to create an inclusive and empowering learning space advocating for ownership of students' learning which will in essence contribute to altering the status quo of unequal power relations operated in the process of knowledge (re)construction in EAP classrooms.

Our research and teaching is framed within the lens of critical action research (Burns, 2010; Kemmis, et al., 2014), which is often understood as a form of classroom research or teacher research that examines a teacher's own practices in partnership with colleagues, students and/or community partners to improve their teaching with critically-oriented pedagogy raising students' critical awareness of issues, diversity, equity, and justice (See Song, 2019; Song & McGaughey, 2022 for more discussion on critical action research). Critical action research proceeds in a spiral and cyclical process. It starts with an initial step of creating a new instructional design and continuing the research with the sequencing steps of practicing and observing teaching practices, reflecting on and analyzing the practices collaboratively, and revising and recreating instructional design based on reflective analysis on the initial teaching practices and evidence of student engagement with teaching practices. Action researchers continue this research process (i.e., planning, acting/observing, reflecting, analyzing, and revising) in a continuum of this cycle until they meet their research goals. In this article, we focus on sharing our instructional design that has been informed

through two action research cycles conducted in 2021 and 2022.

The following section showcases how student participants responded to and further engaged in extended dialogues on two multimodal tasks, *My Cooking Show* and *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression Corner*, which are designed to facilitate learners' English language skills as well as develop intercultural awareness and inclusive global identity through multiliteracies and plurilingual engagement.

Multimodal task one: *My Cooking Show*

In this experiential education (EE)-oriented and learner-centric multimodal task, *My Cooking Show*, learners are assigned to cook and narrate their special food item reflective of their social and cultural identities intersecting with their transnational experiences.

The expected learning outcomes from this task include the following:

1. to practise speech patterns, functions and styles associated with this task;

2. to interact with others' contributions and establish a strong sense of connectedness as a community of language and cultural practice and to learn more about others' cultures as well as their own cultural practices and knowledge associated with the food; and

3. to investigate further with sociocultural and intercultural inquiries through a follow-up (asynchronous) interview activity.

Students are tasked to create a three- to five-minute-long cooking show video to introduce any form of food that is special and meaningful for them as transnational academics. While showing how to prepare and cook the dish, students provide a clear verbal direction to each step, using appropriate sequencing discourse markers, cooking-related vocabulary, and colloquial expressions learned from class sessions. Also, wherever applicable, students are asked to elaborate on the cultural and/or historical remarks, and personal meaning/memories affiliated with the dish. Moreover, students are encouraged to use affective linguistic and paralinguistic features to express their feelings and emotions attached to the dish. Lastly, they are invited to engage in the follow-up online interview forum where all classmates leave verbal or written comments on others' posts with questions. Students are also asked to respond to all of the questions and comments that they received on their own cooking show.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show still images of students' video creations in the *My Cooking Show* project. In his video, a student participant, BW (see figure 1) introduced a spicy instant noodle that he used to eat whenever he was busy working and did not have time to cook. He explained the meaning behind the name of the instant noodle product, and further elaborated how the name of the originally Korean product became

culturally appropriated in China and explained the cross-cultural differences of naming the same product between the Korean and Chinese contexts, known as fire chicken noodles and turkey noodles, respectively. BW who was majoring in Communication and Media Studies, actively incorporated visual and graphic images into his video creation to express the taste and other sensory feelings and emotions alternatively, which seem to show his academic expertise in digital editing skills, organizing images coherently with his oral narrative within the expected academic rhetoric structure (i.e., introduction, contextual information, directions, reflection and conclusion) for this EE based assignment genre.

In MN's cooking show (see Figure 2), she introduced a chicken soup following her mother's recipe. She explained that the chicken soup is viewed as one of the best home remedies for sick people in her home country, China. Also, she added that she eats this food whenever she feels lonely and homesick, which is reflective of the lonely transnational life that many classmates seem to share through their cooking shows and follow-up comments. Similarly, another international student, JES, who is living alone in Canada, chose to cook a cultural dish, sweet and sour pork, in her cooking show (see Figure 3). She was aware of the complicated recipe, ingredients, and procedures of this ubiquitous, authentic Cantonese dish that her mom used to cook for her family as a comfort food. She prepared her cooking show with support from her mom who remotely guided her to complete all steps via a Facetime call. In her reflective task, JES expressed that this cultural dish, though it did not taste the same way she had back home, emotionally *comforted* her by connecting her with her mom and the family food she greatly missed.
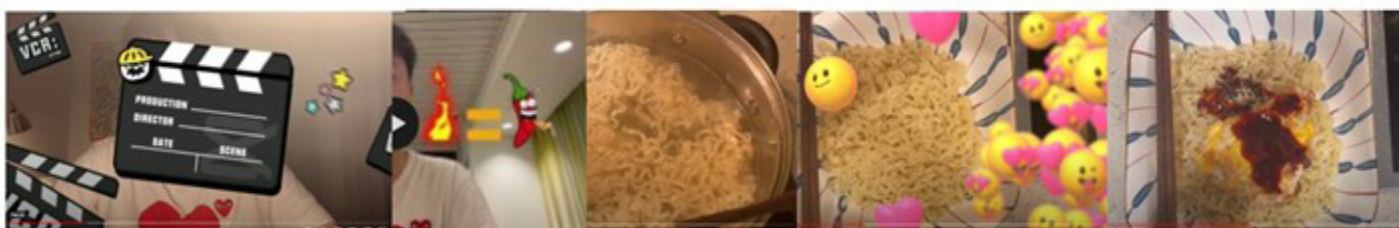

Figure 1. BW' Cooking Show: Spicy Chicken Noodles (Still images from the video file)
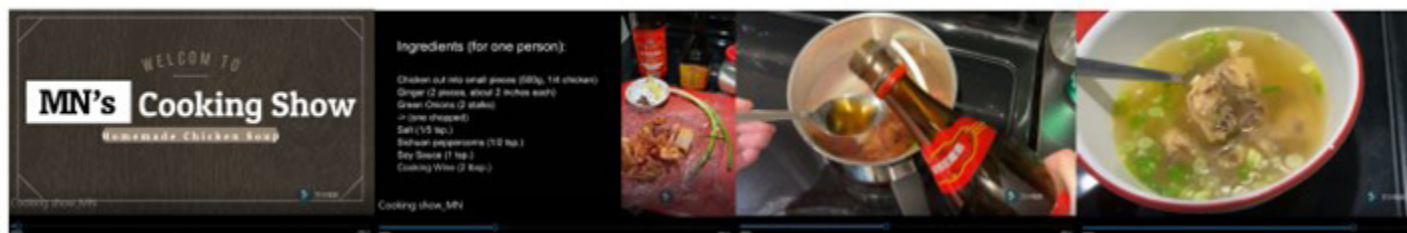

Figure 2. MN's Cooking Show: Homemade Chicken Soup (Still images from the video file)

Figure 3. JES's Cooking Show: Sweet and Sour Pork Ribs (Still images from the video file)

When students were invited to ask questions and further exchange thoughts in the follow-up interview forum, they had an extended dialogue while showing curiosity toward cultural and linguistic knowledge and practice associated with their classmates' cooking shows. Students made evident effort to deepen intercultural knowledge and attitudes toward different dishes introduced by their peers by further inquiring about different culinary practices and sharing more options. In this task, students were navigating and advancing their learning through a collaborative knowledge seeking process. Although as action researchers, we do not intend to quantify learners' academic endeavors, the number of replies/correspondences on most cooking show videos and the interactive engagement among students with subsequent questions and responses were overwhelmingly outstanding. Although the minimum number of the entries required for students, was two comments and two corresponding replies, many students' cooking shows received more than the minimum number of replies (i.e., peer comments and their own responses to the comments). In one class group of the second action research cycle, 20 students shared their cooking shows and there were in total 136 replies/comments exchanged, showing average 6.8 replies made for each cooking show. The preponderance of students' engagement in comments highlights intercultural exchanges and cross-linguistic explorations in multimodal dialogues, as one peer responded to MN's cooking show as the following:

> *I really enjoyed watching your video because I just learned how to make chicken soup in a different way. The way I usually make it is completely different. I usually add either oat or vermicelli to it but it just take[sic] me a lot of time. I will definitely try making your recipe soon. If I want to add some vegetables, what kind of vegetables you think would be better in your recipe? Also, does it matter if I use chicken breast or chicken tight[sic]? Here is the video of how I make chicken soup. I just wanted to share it with you in case you are curious.*

MN's cooking show ignited a continued dialogue in multimodal forms among class participants. In another reply to MN's cooking show (see Figure 4), the commentor was inspired to learn more about different chicken soups thanks to MN and showed a variety of chicken soups across the world from her search sharing the link to different recipes.
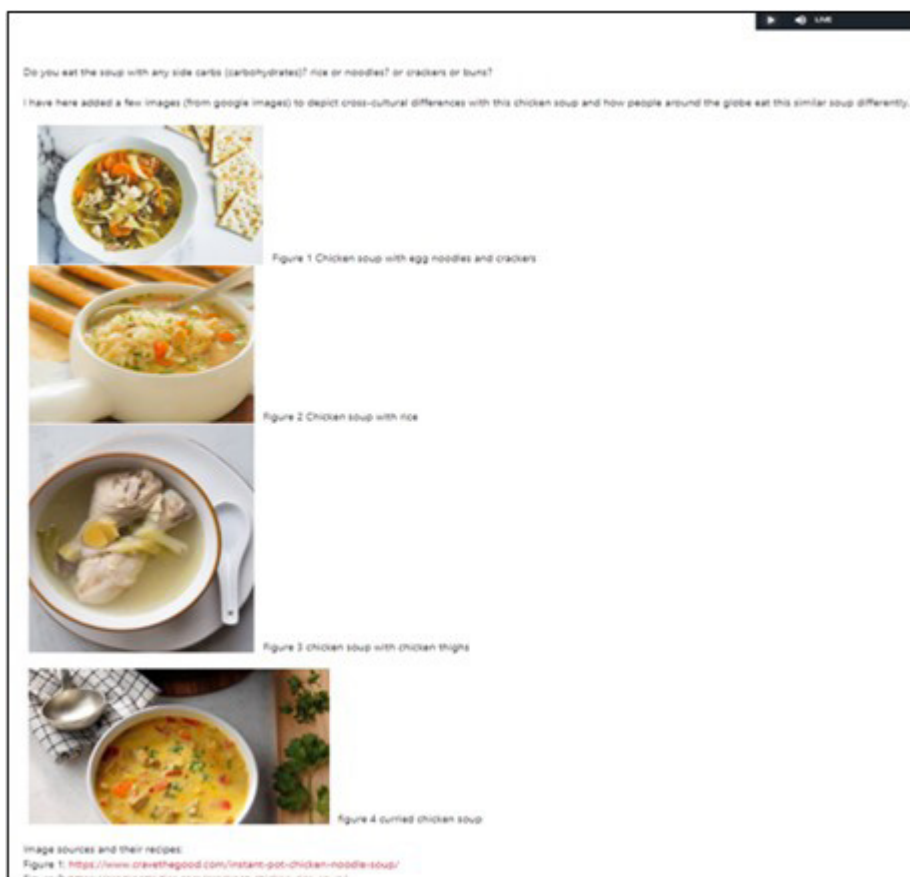
Figure 4. Multimodal Engagement with Cooking Shows on Online Forum (screenshot of a reply to MN's cooking show)

As such, this innovative multimodal task in a communication course creates a space for students to actively perform various functions of language discussed in class, exchange their existing knowledge around their special dish, and also collaboratively discover new knowledge of various foods using multiple modes of expressions such as texts, images, videos, and plurilingual expressions while finding some commonalities and differences of cultural practices behind the foods and feeling social connectedness as transnational academics.

Multimodal task two: *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression Corner*

Another multimodal project, *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression Corner* is devised to allow learners to compare some English colloquial expressions with equivalent expressions in their first languages, which in turn provides learners an opportunity to activate the prior knowledge of first language expressions and facilitate their use of the English expressions in a situational dialogue. Students are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. to learn the connotations and functions of useful English expressions widely used in oral communications at a deeper level,

2. to transfer those expressions to real-life formal, semi-formal and/or casual contexts,

3. to practise translanguaging by employing different linguistic features to maximize their communicative potentials; and

4. increase global connectedness by learning the meaning and application of similar phrases of other cultures through multimodal expressions and intercultural explorations.

To achieve these learning goals, students are assigned to complete the following six step-based components:

1. quotation: select commonly used English colloquial or idiomatic expressions from course materials, meaning & usage: explain the meaning and usage of the quoted expression with an example of the social context when and where the expression could be used,

2. plurilingual and intercultural understanding: provide an equivalent expression in their first or other languages that they know with an example of the social context wherein the expression is used,

3. application: make a dialogue script using the expression with their own words with their own original thoughts,

4. visualization: visualize the expression by linking relevant images or videos,

5. activation: act out in a short dialogue using the expression and create a video of the dialogue.

Some of the students' work on *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression Corner* is shown in Figures 5, 6, and 7. The samples illustrate the process of how learners understand, apply, and internalize new English expressions by relating to their familiar linguistic and cultural knowledge and by utilizing multimodal, plurilingual, and translingual expressions to optimize their advancement of new knowledge.

What is noticeable is that peers were eager to discuss the expressions shared on their virtual learning platform (i.e., Moodle/eClass). For instance, the *to sugar-coat* expression shown in Figure 6 attracted peers' active engagement resulting in multiple plurilingual expressions shared with sociocultural contexts and examples associated with the expression. One peer made the following comment:

Thank you for sharing the meaning of this expression. We also have a similar expression "to sugar coat" in our cultures. We say: "takpin ng asukal" when people express something ironical or send bad news in a positive way. For example, when I received a bronze metal in a swimming game when I was in high school, my friends tried to cheer me up. But I used the phrase "takpin ng asukal" and told them: "you don't have to sugar coat it. I know I have to work harder in order to get a gold next time" (Student Comment)

The student who made this comment shared his understanding in his first language, Tagalog, recalling his own personal moment when the equivalent expression in Tagalog was used in the past.

Figure 5. Student Sample of *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression, to sugar-coat* (screenshot of the student post)

Figure 6. Student Sample of *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression, not my cup of tea* (screenshot of the student post)

Figure 7. Student Sample of *Plurilingual and Intercultural Expression, on the one hand, on the other hand* (screenshot of the student post)

When creating a dialogue using the expressions, students also actively applied the classroom knowledge related to the conversation style and formality of expressions in different social situations that course materials and class discussions explored prior to this task. Students created innovative short role-play/skit videos integrating imagined characters using various objects that they can create by themselves or find around their rooms (e.g., dolls, stuffed animals, paper characters from drawing, finger characters, etc.).

The active engagement in this multimodal task among class participants was also evident to create a space for students' collaborative learning and knowledge advancement as they were eager to share their linguistic and cultural knowledge and showed curiosity to learn more from others related to the given expressions. As a result, students were able to deepen their English and academic literacy skills by understanding, exploring, and applying the meaning and functions of certain expressions in the target language while actively utilizing their existing academic, cultural, and linguistic expertise.

Conclusion

Based on how our creative and culturally responsive instructional design have been operated and how our students' creative multimodal practices have been demonstrated through the two cycles of action research, we can conclude that the multimodality-enhanced pedagogical approaches to teaching English language learners contribute to learners' development of a growing sense of belonging as transnational academics and global participants. The tasks created ample opportunities for learners to relate to their linguistic, cultural and social experiences in a safe and at the same dynamic learning space, which led to increased learner engagement, making culturally responsive learning and inclusive global citizenship possible in an EAP communication course. To this end, we suggest that the instructional design that enables learners to engage in multimodality-enhanced activities and intercultural interactions leads to creating an innovative and inclusive learning space and further deepening their intercultural competence. Importantly, the instructional design that recognizes learners' existing cultural and linguistic identities as well as emerging social identity contributes to building a strong sense of global citizenship.

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Jacqueline Ng is Associate Professor at York University specializing in English Language Studies. Her teaching and research interests include second language education, multiliteracies pedagogy, technology-enhanced teaching and learning, and culture and identity. Her recent research explores how ELL leaners may develop and affirm identities by investing their linguistic, cultural and intellectual knowledge through multimodal practices.

Adapting teaching materials for L2 pragmatics instruction

By Alex Ross, University of British Colombia, Canada

Introduction

In the past three decades, English as an additional language (EAL) researchers and practitioners have become increasingly concerned with the instruction of second language (L2)[1] pragmatics. Broadly defined as the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in social situations (Taguchi, 2015), pragmatics is an essential component of many models of communicative competence (Timpe-Laughlin et al., 2015). Typically, descriptions of L2 pragmatic competence comprise two parts. The first part, known as sociopragmatics, involves knowledge of how contextual factors (e.g. the relationship between speakers) inform language use. The second component, referred to as pragmalinguistic competence, entails knowledge of how particular linguistic forms (e.g. modals to make polite requests) are used to convey pragmatic competence (Leech, 1983). During the 1980s and 1990s, research in L2 pragmatics investigated to what extent it could be learned in the classroom, and surveys of these studies have shown that L2 pragmatics can ultimately be improved through instruction (Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015). In more recent years, researchers have explored factors which may impact the effectiveness of L2 instruction, ranging from individual learner and contextual factors to differing instructional approaches (see Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019 for a meta-analysis of L2 pragmatics instructional studies).

L2 pragmatics and teaching materials

While many of these factors may fall outside of the purview of teaching pragmatics, one relevant area of concern for EAL instructors involves teaching materials. In spite of the importance of incorporating authentic language into textbooks (Vellenga, 2004), studies have shown that textbooks often present pragmatic language and strategies that do not reflect real-world use (e.g. Diepenbroek & Derwing, 2013; Ross, 2018). Additional research has shown that the pragmatic structures presented in textbooks are

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[1]   While the acronym "L2" has traditionally referred to a "second language," my use of the term L2 refers to any additional language.

sometimes inconsistent with the target learners' language level (De Pablos-Ortega, 2011). Ultimately, these findings point to potential issues with commercially available teaching materials, where pragmatic forms are presented without context and conflicting information is given about which pragmatic forms are preferred in specific contexts. Nevertheless, commercially and freely available teaching materials are often a requirement or necessity for EAL instructors. Thus, the objective of this brief report is to provide a practical overview of how to adapt teaching materials for the purpose of L2 pragmatics instruction.

What needs to be taught?

First, it is important to choose which elements of pragmatics you wish to teach your EAL class. Some pragmatic elements may already be embedded in your language program's curriculum or teaching materials; however, these materials may need to be supplemented. In terms of what to teach, one of the most popular components of L2 pragmatics amongst both researchers and practitioners involves speech acts. Speech acts entail patternized and routinized language used to perform specific functions (Cohen, 2008). Practically speaking, these may include functional tasks such as requesting, refusing, complaining, complimenting, apologizing, and even using insults. For a comprehensive yet accessible overview of different speech acts and common strategies and phrases used by proficient English speakers, it may be useful to refer to the University of Minnesota's CARLA website (n.d.). By consulting additional resources such as the CARLA website, it is possible to review the information provided in your teaching materials about a specific speech act and add additional material, as necessary.

Additionally, when considering the needs of your students and which speech acts may be useful to teach, Fujimori and Houck (2004) provide three guiding questions:

1. How frequent and/or important is the speech act?

2. Do students avoid or misuse it?

3. Is their avoidance, or misuse, potentially confusing or offensive, to speakers of English?

Fujimori and Houck also note that certain speech acts such as apologies, refusals, requests, and compliments have been frequently identified as particularly challenging for EAL learners. In the end, it is important to assess the needs of your students to decide which speech acts should be taught and when.

Beyond speech acts, there are other elements of pragmatics that may be appropriate to teach your EAL students. For example, routine formulae, which refers to formulaic language used for social interaction purposes (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2012 for an overview), is often an essential component of L2 pragmatics. Examples of routine formulae may include phrases such as nice to meet you! or I'm sorry for your loss,

and these phrases are typically found within one or more speech acts (e.g. a greeting or condolences). Less researched and taught aspects of L2 pragmatics include gesture or non-verbal cues, tone, implied meaning, and interactional competence (Roever, 2021). The latter involves knowledge about and the ability to organize different speech acts in a conversation (e.g. a greeting, followed by a refusal and then an apology), managing conversation topics and knowing when to pause. While some of these aspects of L2 pragmatics—especially implied meaning and interactional competence—are more appropriate to teach high-intermediate or advanced-level EAL learners; they are just as important as speech acts and often are omitted from commercially available teaching materials.

Recommendations for adapting your teaching materials

Once you have decided what you would like to teach, there are many ways you can adapt your teaching materials to enhance the instruction of L2 pragmatics. To begin, it is important to analyze the pragmatic information available and identify any missing contextual information. This may include information about the relationship between the speakers (e.g. classmates, family, co-workers), how familiar they are with each other (e.g. acquaintances or old friends) and where they are (e.g. at work or at a party). All of this contextual information will inform you about which pragmalinguistic forms are most appropriate to use in a given situation. Depending on the level of the learner, it may be useful to vary this contextual information across different scenarios and discuss how language choices (e.g. formal vs. informal) may change.

To complement this contextual information, the use of authentic language samples and multimedia is highly recommended, when possible. To provide additional examples of common phrases or speech acts used in a particular situation, it is easy to gather a few authentic audio-recorded responses or written text samples from coworkers, friends, or family on instant messaging apps. In terms of multimedia, commercially available teaching materials often do not provide sufficient aural or visual information to accompany pragmatic information. This can easily be remediated with online resources to enhance the authenticity of the teaching materials. Tangibly speaking, these resources could include images of real people, or video clips showcasing different voices, accents, and non-verbal gestures to provide additional pragmatic information.

Conclusion

In summary, previous research has highlighted the need for L2 pragmatics to be better integrated into EAL curricula and teaching materials. Still, with a basic understanding of what L2 pragmatics involves, it is possible to adapt what resources are already available to you and meet the needs of your EAL students.

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Perspectives on classroom writing assessment literacy in ESL/EFL contexts

By Ameni Benali, York University, Canada

Abstract

Despite the importance of writing assessment in ESL/EFL classrooms, it is not getting enough attention either from teacher education program designers or from teachers themselves. It is commonly believed that assessment courses do not have much to offer to classroom teachers compared to high stake tests. Some classroom teachers avoid learning about writing assessment skills and knowledge because they are against their beliefs or because they feel overwhelmed with the effective assessment guidelines. As for teacher education courses and graduate programs, they include either limited or no instructions about writing assessment literacy (Crusan, 2010; Weigle, 2007). This paper investigates second and foreign language teachers' knowledge, practices, and beliefs about writing assessment and the role of teacher education in improving teachers' writing assessment literacy. My discussion shows that classroom teachers have some beliefs and knowledge about writing assessment and that these beliefs may influence their classroom practices. It also throws light on the importance of assessment literacy in improving teaching and learning and therefore calls for including assessment literacy in teacher education programs.

Keywords: *Second language writing, classroom writing assessment, assessment literacy, assessment for learning, formative assessment, written corrective feedback, second language teacher education, teachers' beliefs*

1. Introduction

1.1 Classroom writing assessment

Writing plays a central role in learning second/foreign languages. Research has shown that some assessment activities like frequent and immediate feedback can improve the quality of writing and learning in general (Ellis, 2009; Lee, 2017). Classroom writing assessment can be used in L2 classrooms to provide learners with their final scores and to gauge their output (Lee, 2007). This product-based assessment in which the teacher plays a dominant role as an assessor of his passive learners' performance, is referred to as assessment of learning (AoL) (Carless, 2011). Although AoL is thought to be a traditional type of assessment that is used mainly in standardized tests, it is still implemented in ESL/EFL classrooms today (Lee, 2017). L2 classroom writing assessment can also be process-oriented in which teachers play the role of mediators who help their learners improve their writing by providing them with effective frequent feedback while learners themselves are engaged in a continuous process of revising and editing (Lee, 2017). This type of assessment is referred to as formative assessment or assessment for learning (AfL) and it "can be used as a part of instruction to support and enhance learning" (Shepard, 2000, p. 4). AfL activities such as constant feedback, allow teachers to frequently evaluate learners' progress and adapt their classroom instructions accordingly. Other AfL practices like peer assessment, self-feedback, and student portfolio give the learners the opportunity to monitor and improve their own learning in a self-regulated environment which can promote learner autonomy and motivation to write (Lee, 2017).

1.2 Theoretical framework

Changes in teaching and learning theory in the early 21st century from behaviorism to social constructivism brought new changes to the field of teaching and learning, as well (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). These changes led to the reconceptualization of assessment principles and practices and the emergence of AfL. From a social constructivist perspective, learning is described as an activity that is socially and culturally constructed, teachers are described as mediator facilitators and learners are described as active participants in the learning process (Lee, 2017). L2 classroom assessment has also been influenced by the sociocultural theory. From a sociocultural framework, assessment is seen as an important tool for writing development and learning development in general (Lee, 2017). Research suggests that writing assessment should be accommodated to the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD) which refers to the "distance between the actual developmental level determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development determined through problem-solving in collaboration with more capable peers or seniors" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, assessment can function as a scaffolding tool in which the teacher uses assessment practices like frequent feedback to understand what the learner can achieve on their own

and what they can achieve with the guidance of the teacher, peers, or technology tools to help them improve (Lee, 2017). In this collaboration, learners are engaged in a process of meaning-making and an ongoing evaluation of their output, which can improve the quality of their writing and lead to developing their ability to "monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning" (Nicol, 2010). Consequently, more capable facilitators like teachers, provide frequent support to their learners by encouraging and redirecting them when necessary (Lee, 2017). In a nutshell, classroom assessment from a sociocultural framework is seen as a dynamic activity that informs classroom instruction and aims for improving learners' development while considering different learners' ZPD (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004).

1.3 Effective writing assessment guidelines

Lee (2017) suggests a list of assessment guidelines to assure the efficient implementation of AfL. First, he argues that assessment should be integrated with learning and teaching and students need to be aware of the learning goals and assessment rubric at early teaching stages (Lee, 2017). Second, he emphasizes on the importance of using formative assessment. Simply put, learners should be given the opportunity to draft, receive frequent feedback and edit their output multiple times to improve their writing and learning (Lee, 2017). The last principle is that of providing constructive effective feedback. Lee argues that teachers need to provide their students with "quality" feedback and need to show the ability to adjust feedback types that they use based on pedagogical considerations like the students' needs or levels (Lee, 2017, p. 16).

Despite the importance of classroom writing assessment in improving teaching and learning, AfL is not always effectively implemented in EFL/ESL classrooms for many reasons. First, research has shown that most L2 writing teachers lack assessment literacy as they have not received sufficient training in implementing AfL principles in their classrooms (Crusan et al., 2016). Second, teachers may hold some beliefs about writing assessment and these beliefs can contradict AfL principles and activities which may hinder teaching and learning. Finally, second language teacher education (SLTE) programs are thought to provide little about writing assessment literacy compared with writing instruction and other aspects of teaching and learning. In this paper, I examine writing assessment literacy and its importance in enhancing teaching and learning in ESL/EFL classrooms. The second major objective of this paper is to explore what teachers believe and know about writing assessment and how these beliefs can influence classroom practices. Finally, I discuss the role of SLTE programs in improving writing assessment literacy. Consequently, the research questions are as follows:

- What is writing assessment literacy and why is it important?

- What are second language writing teachers' beliefs, practices, and knowledge about classroom writing assessment?

- What is the role of teacher education in improving writing assessment literacy?

2. Discussion

2.1 The importance of assessment literacy

Assessment Literacy (AL) has been defined as "mastery of knowledge, skills, and principles in planning and developing well-constructed assessment tasks, from which useful assessment data are interpreted and utilized to inform pedagogy and learning", and it also includes "assessment knowledge of designing, implementing, grading, and providing feedback for improving student learning" (Lam, 2019, pp. 78–79). Research suggests a list of skills that teachers need to master to become successful assessors. First, L2 teachers need to be familiar with the different steps of quality assessment design including validity and reliability to be able to evaluate their students' learning and improve classroom practices. Validity is considered "the essential quality of a good assessment" (Green, 2014, p. 75), and it refers to the evidence collected before, during, and after designing the assessment to prove that the interpretation of the assessment data can be valid and trusted in making future decisions (Green, 2014). Assessment reliability, also referred to as "scoring validity" can be granted when the test score reflects the test takers' skills and abilities and when test takers receive the same scores if they take other versions of the test or if their performance is evaluated by other assessors (Knoch & Elder, 2013, p. 51). Second, test users need to make sure that the designed assessment treats all test takers fairly and that interpretations of test results will bring about benefits in society. In general, assessment should be consistent and meaningful in terms of score interpretation for all test takers. The test should also be free of bias against all test takers in terms of content and constructs by avoiding favoring one group of assessees over another (Green, 2014). Third, writing teachers should be able to produce good quality rubrics that are appropriate for providing evidence of the learners' skills and abilities (Knoch & Elder, 2013). Lee (2017, p. 150) has suggested at least seven assessment essentials that writing teachers should be aware of and capable of doing for them to be assessment literate. For example, he suggests that classroom teachers should be able to:

- understand the different purposes of classroom writing assessment and use that to maximize students' learning;

- utilize feedback effectively to improve student learning;

- involve students in self-assessment, peer assessment, goal setting, self-monitoring and self-reflection;

- employ different classroom writing assessment tools to maximize student learning, e.g., teacher feedback forms, error ratio analysis, the error log, peer feedback, and portfolio assessment;

- design effective classroom writing assessment tasks to evaluate student writing, e.g., technology-enhanced writing tasks;

- use assessment effectively to motivate students and help them learn;

- make use of classroom assessment to improve instruction

In this paper, Assessment Literacy (AL) will be used to refer to teachers' knowledge and implementation of effective assessment quality, principles, and skills that are used to improve teaching and learning in second and foreign language writing classrooms.

Research has shown that assessment literacy can have positive consequences on teachers, learners, teaching and learning, and society. For Example, it has been claimed that poor assessment literacy can lead to designing unfair poor quality assessments which is why "writing teachers must be adequately prepared to construct, administer, score, and communicate the results of valid and reliable classroom tests" (Weigle, 2007, p. 195). Moreover, it has been recommended that L2 teachers need to be adequately prepared to design fair assessments that reflect test takers' true writing abilities and skills, create rubrics, and make fair judgments about the assessee's levels as these results can be used to make important decisions that can directly impact students' future like placing a learner at the right level (Popham, 2009). On the other hand, unsuccessful assessment practices can have negative impacts on learners like wasting time, money, and effort in addition to losing self-confidence and motivation. In general, it is widely agreed that poor assessment literacy can "cripple the quality of education" (Popham, 2009, p. 4) and that even efforts made by educational institutions to provide learners with modern equipment and useful materials to improve learning, would be fruitless if teachers are not assessment literate (Mellati & Khademi, 2018; Popham, 2004; Weigle, 2007;).

Furthermore, it has been argued that successful implementation of AfL allows teachers to frequently monitor their student's progress and engage them in the learning process. In addition to this, assessment literacy is said to help teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their practices, and adjust their classroom instruction and teaching materials accordingly to meet their students' needs which enhances both teaching and learning (Mellati & Khademi, 2018).

It is also commonly believed that developing teachers' skills and abilities of rating and providing constructive feedback can increase their self-efficacy and confidence and thereby improves theaters performance (Dempsey et al., 2009).

Finally, poor assessment literacy is thought to have a negative impact on society. Along with this, Taylor (2010) states that second and foreign language students today learn English to get a better job, to take high-scale tests, or enroll in international universities, and if classroom assessments are developed, scored, and interpreted by writing teachers who lack the adequate training, knowledge, and skills to do so, score outcomes may be used inconsistently to make poor decisions that can have negative impacts on society.

2.2 L2 teachers' practices knowledge and beliefs about writing assessment

There is evidence in research that teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching, learning, and assessment can inform their practices in writing assessment (Munoz, 2012). It has been also argued that teachers' beliefs about assessment can influence students' learning outcomes (Brown, 2004). Consequently, it is important to explore what teachers think and know about assessment and how these beliefs inform their practices. Some empirical studies were carried out to investigate second language teachers' knowledge, practices, and beliefs about assessing writing.

Earlier in 1992, Pajares (1992) claims that beliefs are constructed in the early stages of life through the process of enculturation and social construction and thereby they influence people's perceptions (towards themselves and the world) and actions. He then draws from findings in education and suggests that teachers' beliefs are no different than other kinds of beliefs and that by the time teachers start their career, the beliefs that they have constructed as previous learners become very powerful and resistant to change (Pajares,1992; Johnson, 1999). In L2 context, teachers hold some beliefs about writing assessment. Munoz et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate sixty-two foreign language teachers' beliefs and implementation of a new oral and written assessment system at a university in Colombia. For the assessment of writing, teachers use the "assessment of writing system" which consists of a set of writing rubrics aligned with standards to be used for each course. In addition, it contains suggested tasks, writing conventions to check grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling problems, and some guidelines for teaching and assessing writing. Teachers' beliefs were examined in four areas based on Brown' (2004) four conceptions of assessment purposes. These conceptions state that; 1) "assessment improves students' learning and the quality of teaching", 2) "assessment can be used to account for a teacher's, a school's, or a system's use of society's resources … to demonstrate that they are doing a good job", 3) "students are held individually accountable for their learning through assessment" and 4) "assessment has no legitimate place within teaching and learning". Data were collected through surveys, writing reports, and interviews. Data analysis revealed that

participant teachers hold positive beliefs about assessment and they think that assessment can be used to improve teaching and learning. The findings also showed that though the teachers think that assessment serves formative purposes in that it can help them acknowledge the changes that they should make to improve their classroom practice, they showed a preference to use traditional summative assessment (AoL). In fact, they reported some challenges they encountered when using formative assessment due to a lack of understanding of the new assessment approach and how to use assessment results to improve teaching and learning. This study showed a dissonance between the participants' expressed beliefs and real classroom practices. However, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on teachers' beliefs about writing assessment as it only investigates teachers' beliefs and knowledge regarding using assessment to enhance learning and teaching but it did not explore teachers' beliefs and knowledge in other essential issues like assessment quality, rating, using rubrics, etc.

Crusan et al. (2016) conducted a study to investigate what second language teachers know about writing assessment, how they have learned what they know, their beliefs about writing assessment, and their classroom practices. A survey with 54 items was created based on researchers' and scholars' (Malone, 2013; Mertler, 2009; Popham, 2009; Scarino, 2013; Stiggins, 2002; Taylor, 2010 as cited in Crusan et al., 2016, p. 47) recommendations about the most important aspects of assessment literacy that writing assessment teachers should know. The survey included multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended response items. The findings revealed that most teachers think that assessment is an interesting and essential part of teaching. Almost half of the participants believe that using rubrics is important in helping their students understand feedback while 27% of them think that their students do not pay attention to rubrics. In terms of scoring, findings reveal a discrepancy in the participants' beliefs as more than half of them think that scoring is not accurate while the same percentage think that scoring is not subjective. Most of them think that reliability in scoring is difficult and that rater training is not helpful. In terms of assessment methods, the majority of the participants think that portfolios and self-assessment are good tools for writing assessments. What was surprising in the generated data however was that 70% of the teachers believe that multiple-choice items are suitable for assessing writing while only 35% think that essay exams are more appropriate. In terms of practice, data analysis revealed the majority of the participants use AfL tools including process writing, formative assessment, and multiple drafting. Finally, teacher participants reported that the rubrics they use in class are either adopted from standardized tests or are locally developed and that when assessing their students' writing they use multiple-choice tasks in addition to other performance-based tasks.

Results from this study revealed that the teachers hold some knowledge about writing assessment. The findings also confirmed claims that teachers' beliefs and knowledge influence their classroom practices.

However, there is evidence in research that there is a difference between teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practices (Borg, 2001). Consequently, further research is needed to explore how teachers' beliefs inform their practices through qualitative data collection including interviews, classroom observations, and/or video recording of teaching episodes.

Lam (2019) carried out a study to examine Hong Kong secondary school teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices in classroom-based writing assessment. Sixty-six teachers responded to surveys that include questions about their knowledge (assessment theories, understanding of and rationale behind using AoL, Assessment for Learning and AfL and Assessment, and the challenges they may encounter when learning about writing assessment theories), beliefs (opinion of nature, purpose, and effectiveness of alternative writing assessment) and practices (frequency and types of writing assessment assigned to students, types of feedback provided and their effectiveness) in writing assessment. Interviews were conducted to gather more data about teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices. Three of the teachers who were interviewed were observed twice to see how they conduct classroom-based writing assessments. During the observed episodes, students were taught how to compose argumentation using multiple drafts, self-assessment, peer assessment, and the portfolio approach. The findings revealed that the teachers are knowledgeable about classroom assessment but not in theories of reliability and validity. The participants held positive beliefs about classroom assessment, were confident in using assessment to enhance writing performance, and attempted using process writing, conferencing, portfolio assessment, and rubric-referenced assessment in their classrooms. However, the data also showed that teachers think that they are not assessment literate as they have a limited understanding of AfL. This was confirmed later after observing writing assessment episodes. Indeed, Lam (2019) reported that teachers were not ready to take up their new roles as writing assessors and that despite attempts to use post-writing activities, assessment results were not used to enhance teaching and/or learning.

The three studies showed that though writing teachers hold positive beliefs about AfL and think that it can enhance teaching and learning, most of them were unable to implement its principles and practices either because they were not confident enough or because they did not know how to use assessment results to improve their instruction and their students' writing outcomes. Consequently, all the researchers in the studies discussed above recommended that teachers need to improve their assessment literacy through teacher education and professional development.

2.3 The role of SLTE in improving writing assessment literacy

Teacher education refers to the "mastery of subject-specific knowledge and skills, which govern what teachers think and do when carrying out a change in their pedagogical and assessment practices" (Wilson

& Berne, 1999 as cited in Lam 2018, p. 100). There is limited research that investigates the role of teacher education in improving classroom writing assessment literacy (Lee, 2017). It is also commonly agreed that second language teacher education programs pay no or little attention to assessment development (Stiggins, 2002).

Dempsey et al. (2019) explored the effects of using an internet-based critical thinking tool on pre-service teachers' proficiency progress in writing assessment, their confidence for writing assessment, and their writing assessment skills, knowledge, beliefs, and practices. The researchers tracked potential progress in teachers' knowledge of the writing rubric and in assessment skills and their self-efficacy for assessing. Participants were provided scaffolded practice with authentic writing assessment tasks and were later asked to reflect on the experience and on what they had learned. The findings revealed that writing teachers made significant progress in building conscious recognition of the declarative rules underlying an analytic writing assessment system and they showed significant increases in self-efficacy for assessing writing tasks. Moreover, the study revealed that expert feedback helped teachers improve their writing assessment knowledge and practices as well as their ability to assess authentic students' assessments. It also showed that online professional training can help enhance teachers' confidence, a trait that its absence can impact teachers' decisions and practices of writing assessment in the classroom. However, the findings only showed the progress of the participants during the course but there is no evidence that this progress will be seen in real classroom contexts on a long-term basis or if it leads to better learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study only focuses on improving teachers' skills and knowledge in rating writing assessments and in improving their self-efficacy towards assessment but it did not touch upon other skills and challenges that are thought to be essential in teaching teachers about writing assessment. Researchers also reported that the participants did not use "think about" tasks so often. Consequently, if this tool is incorporated with face to face teacher education program (in which features like "think about" and other activities are guided by teacher educators) instead of a stand-alone course, it may lead to better teaching and learning outcomes.

Mellati & Khademi (2018) conducted a study to investigate teachers' assessment literacy development and its impact on their current assessment practices, and on their students' learning outcomes. Both ESL teachers and learners participated in the study. As for learners, they were divided into two groups: The first group was taught by teachers with high assessment literacy, and the second group was taught by teachers with low assessment literacy. Data analysis showed that AL has a statistically significant impact on teachers' assessment practices, and on learners' writing achievement and abilities. The findings also revealed that there is a great difference between classroom practices taught by assessment literate and illiterate teachers. Assessing literate teachers' practices were characterized by setting goals based on learners' interests,

dynamic assessment through classroom assignments, and giving feedback. Writing assessment literate teachers claimed that their practices were the result of effective teacher education. On the other hand, writing assessment illiterate teachers reported other reasons for their failure in implementing formative assessment in the classroom like time constraints and limited knowledge in some aspects of assessment. The findings strengthened our confidence in the importance of teacher education in improving teachers' knowledge and learners' writing outcomes. However, it is worth mentioning that the study only focused on the impact of teacher education on improving teachers' knowledge about using dynamic assessment to improve learners' achievement, while other aspects that are considered essential in writing assessment literacy (like knowledge of feedback, error correction, assessment quality, and rating) were absent from the study. Further investigation of these aspects is required to determine the effectiveness of teacher learning in improving teachers' knowledge and skills in all writing assessment aspects.

In another case study, Lam (2018) investigated the impact of teacher education on the trial of portfolio assessment and the influence of school contextual factors on implementing this approach. Portfolio assessment includes self-assessment, learner reflection, continued monitoring, and reviewing of composing process (self-regulated learning). Two experienced teachers; Willy and Winifred from two different local schools in Hong Kong participated in this study. The findings revealed that the impact of teacher education programs depends on how teachers internalize the connection between theory and practice and make knowledge transfer as part of professional development. Willy failed to understand the pedagogical rationale of portfolio assessment (such as using self-reflection to align teaching and assessment of writing to improve learning) and he only carried it out as a set of technical procedures because he followed the practices of portfolio assessment uncritically and without taking his students' preferences and the school system and context into consideration. On the other hand, Winifred developed a "transferring approach" to try and evaluate what she learned in the teacher development course in her classroom context by performing school-based collaborative inquiry.

This study showed that teacher education could help teachers understand writing assessment and improve their practices if they can implement it with a critical eye in their classroom. However, this study did not report on the impact of the implementation of the portfolio assessment on learners' outcomes. It was only based on the researcher's conclusions hence if supported with data about learners' achievement as a result of the implementation of this approach, findings could be more accurate. Finally, Willy's inability to implement formative assessment could be attributed to the failure of the teacher education program to prepare student teachers for such a challenge.

Lee (2010) investigated writing teachers' perspectives on their progress during a writing teacher education

program in a small-scale study. Data were collected through interviews and classroom research. The study showed that the teacher education program helped teacher participants to challenge some of their old beliefs and practices about assessment and feedback and instead adopt new student-centered approaches that encourage peer feedback. The findings also highlight the role of teacher education practices like critical reflection and narrative inquiry in helping student teachers relate theory to practice and realize the importance of classroom specificities and context.

3. Conclusion

My discussion has confirmed claims in literature that most L2 classroom teachers hold some beliefs about effective writing assessment and that these beliefs may contradict AfL principles and practices and can thereby influence classroom instruction, learning, and teaching. My discussion has also revealed that second language teacher education can be effective in improving classroom teachers' writing assessment literacy if certain principles are put into practice.

First, drawing from a sociocultural and social constructivist framework, teacher education pedagogies need to shift to a "learn to teach" (Freeman & Johnson) pedagogy. In other words, as teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning are socially constructed from previous learning experiences and through interaction with peers, teachers, and communities, learning to teach in teacher education programs should follow the same process of experiential learning. Simply put, raising student teachers' awareness of their beliefs and helping them challenge and rethink these beliefs should be the primary goal of teacher education programs (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Research in teacher education has suggested using critical reflection tasks, (Wallace, 1991; Crandall, 2000; Farrel, 2009), group discussions (Singh & Richards, 2006), teacher narrative, and storytelling (Crandall, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2009) and peer coaching and collaborative teaching (Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007) to help student teachers reflect on their beliefs. In L2 writing assessment context, reflection is considered essential in improving assessment literacy (Lam, 2018, Lee, 2010). Without implementing these strategies in teacher education pedagogies, these courses will remain ineffective, and writing teachers will end up with a new set of principles and theories that they are unable to implement in their actual classrooms as "development implies change, and fruitful change is extremely difficult without reflection" (Wallace, 1991, p. 54).

Second, the analysis of the studies presented in this paper shows that teacher education programs should include all important assessment principles and practices that allow writing teachers to create, administer, and use the data of the assessment properly and fairly to make important decisions about teaching and learning.

Third, my discussion revealed the importance of preparing writing teachers for assessment context specificity. Student teachers need to understand that the assessment-specific context in which it takes place like students' goals and the institution policy, need to be taken into consideration (Davies, 2008). As Scarino (2013) aptly puts it, assessment is "situated in distinctive institutional and policy contexts that confer on the assessment process particular characteristics and requirements" (p. 311). Consequently, for teacher education and professional development to be effective, it should be comprehensive of all assessment principles and practices, adaptative to different teaching contexts, and continuing.

4. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for further studies

This research has some implications for writing assessment teachers, teacher education program designers, and researchers.

Findings from this review can help writing assessment teachers realize the importance of developing writing AL in improving their performance, raising their confidence, and improving their learners' writing outcomes. It may also help them realize that some of their beliefs and prior knowledge are powerful and may negatively impact their teaching and assessment practices. This may encourage them to reflect on their practices and exchange and discuss their beliefs not only in teacher education programs but also in informal contexts with their colleagues.

Furthermore, this review can encourage researchers to conduct more empirical studies to evaluate in-depth the effectiveness of teacher learning programs in improving teachers' writing AL.

Finally, discussing the importance of writing AL and its mutually informing relationship with learning can help teacher education program designers realize the importance of including writing assessment in their courses mainly that this review reveals that second and foreign language teachers lack writing AL and hold some wrong and contradicted beliefs that may impact not only assessing their students but also their learning outcomes.

Although this review has some implications, it is difficult to draw accurate conclusions from the studies discussed above. Regarding teachers' practices, knowledge, and beliefs about writing AL, further research is needed to examine the relationship between teachers' expressed beliefs and classroom practices. As for teacher education programs, it is also difficult to draw conclusions about the role of teacher learning and education in improving writing assessment literacy based on these studies for many reasons. First, all the studies focused on improving teachers' writing literacy in specific areas in writing assessment (like scoring and using assessment to improve learning and teaching) but they did not cover other aspects that are said

to be essential (like improving teachers' knowledge and skills in assessment quality; validity, reliability, and fairness, giving feedback, interpreting results, etc.). Second, all the studies discussed above except for the first one did not provide a description of the content and pedagogy of the teacher education courses and without this information, it is difficult to say if the challenges encountered by some participants were caused by the limitations of the program itself or other factors. Finally, it is worth mentioning that there is a death of empirical studies that investigate the role of teacher education in improving writing assessment literacy and these studies cannot be accurate representations of the effectiveness of these programs. Consequently, further empirical studies are required. I suggest conducting a longitudinal empirical study that investigates the impact of taking a teacher education program on teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices in writing assessment. Data can be collected quantitatively from a large representative sample and it should be supported with qualitative data through interviews and classroom observations of teachers to observe any potential changes in the teachers' AL not only in theory but also in practice. In addition to this, their students' writing outcomes could be evaluated to measure any possible progress.

Furthermore, as classroom assessment has not received sufficient attention in teacher education programs, there were attempts from researchers, scholars, and teachers to fill this gap by providing teachers with skills and knowledge that they need in educational assessment (Popham, 2009). Weigle (2007) provides some criteria to help teachers develop writing assessment that meets the qualities of effective assessment and this includes the quality of reliability, validity, and applicability. In addition to this, she suggests some skills that teachers need to learn to improve their AL and which include "setting measurable objectives, deciding how to assess objectives, setting tasks, and scoring," etc. In addition to this, writing assessment teachers can always improve their literacy by relying on other effective resources like the regional associations of language testing specialists that hold annual conferences, assessment-related sessions held in international conferences such as TESOL, and other books and research that discuss assessment issues in clear terminology (Weigle, 2007). Until teacher education programs begin integrating writing AL in their programs, writing assessment teachers can rely on these resources and recommendations to improve their writing AL.

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The Native Speaker Myth and re-storying oneself within a disempowering discourse

By Ivana Stanisavljevic, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, Canada

It was in high school that I started toying with the idea of pursuing teaching as a career. Having not known much about what I needed to pursue for this career path initially, I assumed my plan to earn a university degree in literature would be enough. When I found out that teacher's college was a necessity as well, I was somewhat surprised. I wondered, what about teacher's college would make me a teacher per se, was not simply knowing the subject matter that I would be teaching enough? This is a topic which I continue to ponder to this day: What makes a teacher? To be more precise, what makes a competent teacher? Is knowing the subject matter simply enough or is there something more?

As I started studying and teaching languages and literature, as a language teacher and student, I started to develop a criteria for *good* language teaching more clearly. Having earned a job teaching Serbian school simply based on the criteria of knowing the language, I quickly learned that this was not enough to qualify me to teach the language. I needed further understanding of the language itself as well as to understand that no language is a fixed system—it is always evolving and everchanging (Schleppegrell, 2018, p. 2). Having earned a Bachelors of English, I assumed I spent enough time studying the language, its ins and outs, and had a acquired enough of a knowledge base to teach it. However, I also found this theory of mine contradicted once I started teaching English myself. Not being a native English speaker myself, I experienced a lot of scrutiny from students and parents in my teaching practices. I was faced with the Native Speaker myth; this assumes that native speakers (NS) are inherently better teachers than non-native speakers (NNSs) (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 31). I am not sure if I still have an answer as to what exactly makes a competent language teacher, but in this paper, it is my aim to explore this question more by looking into the criteria for becoming a language teacher as well as exploring whether NS of a language have an easier time in the teaching world and achieve greater success as their *nativeness* gives them an instant level of credibility. Finally, I will explore how the NS myth affects the pedagogy, teaching practice and day to day lessons of non-native teachers as well as whether the NS myth affects their confidence levels and make them question their competence as teachers? I plan to do so through examining my personal narrative as a NNSs as well as my experience teaching Serbian as a NS.

While in university, one of my first ever teaching jobs was teaching Serbian school classes at my church. Granted I was not yet a certified educator, I still thought this to be the perfect job for myself. Since I spoke the language, I wondered, what else could I really need to know? I assumed that simply by being a native speaker I would automatically be a better teacher than a non-native speaker. In retrospect, I find myself guilty of the native speaker myth. This is the assumption that NSs of a language are inherently better teachers than NNSs (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 33). This myth continues to marginalize Non-Native speaking teachers and thus undermines their professionalism (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 33). Very quickly I realized that simply knowing the language was not nearly enough to qualify me to teach Serbian. I found myself struggling in a lot of my planning of my language program. While yes, I knew the language (technically), I did not know nor understand the language as a living and breathing being. I did not know its history. I viewed the Serbian language as a fixed system as opposed to one that is always evolving and is ever-changing. In my mind, language (Serbian in this case) was a separate and isolated entity, which lived in its own lonely world, isolated from all other disciplines. Holding such a view, left my students bored and simply uninterested in learning this language. Very quickly I realized that I had to do something to intrigue my class and hook them into learning Serbian. My way of doing this was through the incorporation of Serbian history lessons into my language program. I integrated historical events and stories into lessons about grammar and reading in such way as to make my program relevant and interesting to students. It was at this point in my teacher education and my teaching career, that I started to wonder and wanted to define for myself what makes a *competent* language teacher, what precisely is the criteria for this title? While I am still developing and shaping this criteria until this day, one of the main components of my criteria of what exactly is a *competent educator* that I added during my time teaching Serbian school was education in language history and an understanding that each language is not a fixed entity but is always changing and evolving.

Once I started studying English, I decided that this would be the language I would focus this in-depth study on. English teachers need to be aware that the English language (like all languages) is not a fixed system, and it is always in a process of evolution. I feel that through my four years of studying English at the university level, I started to develop an understanding for this concept. English teachers need to adjust their teaching to reflect this. As speakers and writers, we draw on options in different ways, depending on what/or with whom we are interacting (Schleppegrell, 2018, p. 2). Language is often missing from teacher education programs. If teacher education programs can provide English teachers with a greater understanding about language itself and the way that students can be supported in language development, then these teachers will have a greater range of classroom strategies, but also they will be able to take on new leadership roles in working with subject area teachers (Schleppegrell, 2018, p. 2). Language teachers should develop a way of teaching English to students while also learning school subjects, a way of integrating

the two into one program. These educators need to be able to analyze a unit of study, to understand the tasks which students are expected to do, and to use this knowledge to support a focus on the language features which are relevant to the task and goal (Schleppegrell, 2018, p. 8). English language learners are usually expected to develop both English and subject area knowledge at a pace that allows them to have fully developed content knowledge in all subject areas learned, as well as control of the English language through which these subject areas are taught and learned. To do so is no small task, and this is where language educators can come to be the biggest resource/support during this process. My undergraduate degree program prepared me in such a way as to come to understand language as this ever-changing and evolving system. However, my teacher education did not. It was only in my practice teaching that I developed the philosophy that language can be found within all disciplines and affects everything. This is exactly how it should be taught. A lot of language teachers treat language as a separate entity, which exists away from all other subject areas. This is just not the case. Once I developed this mindset, I thought that I was ready for the language teaching world, as in my mind, based on my previously set out criteria, I had deemed myself to be a *competent* educator.

Native-speakerness is still considered to be a main criterion for language teacher ads (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 36). Freshly out of teacher's college, I definitely found this to be the case when looking at English teaching ads for work abroad. Most of the job ads for Korea or China, which I came across, highlighted the importance of westerners and NS. When looking for job opportunities, NNESTs (Non-native English Speakers) chances of getting work are much more influenced by their race/accent as opposed to their professional qualifications (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 36). This propels NNEST anxiety which is a sense of professional inadequacy that prevents qualified NNESTs from becoming confident instructors (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 37). This was a concept with which I would become all too familiar very soon into my first teaching job. I briefly considered a career abroad as I met all of the criteria and standards, as well as the education component. However, before I had the chance to even apply, I was offered an English teaching position at a private Chinese run school in Kitchener, Ontario. I was excited, eager, and a little nervous, but I knew that I had all of the qualifications and requirements to do this job well. I was teaching a grade 12 university English course as well as an advanced level ESL course. I was ready for the adventure to begin. However, I was unaware of the uncomfortable situations as well as feelings of inadequacy I was about to face.

People understand their lives by narrating them and we all build our *storied selves* (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 38). Teachers understand their practice and weave their identity through the act of telling narratives (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 38). Narrative inquiry enables teachers to explore and articulate the tacit

connection between their identity and their instructional practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 39). As an educator, I am no different from this. To this day, I tell stories of where I came from and stories of my day to day experiences, friendships, relationships, past experiences, and I do so all in the hopes of getting my students to share their narratives with me as a means of helping me create a more engaging and meaningful program for them; one which reflects their needs and interests. The *storied self* with which I presented my class, was not one which they imagined to be an *adequate* English teacher for them. I was not the typical Westerner which they had imagined should be teaching them English. I spoke with an Eastern European accent (all things that a *competent* English teacher is perhaps not).

Based on all of the previously mentioned criteria, my qualifications to be teaching English started being questioned. Language and discourse play a major role in society, as who we are to each other. In many contexts qualified NNESTs are positioned as *less able* professionals than NESTs (Native English speakers), and this is done by public discourse, institutions where they work, their colleagues, students, and even some everyday acquaintances (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 32). This was exactly what was happening to me in this work environment. Just because I was not born in Canada or another English-speaking country, and because English was not my first language, I was deemed incompetent and not *good enough* to teach it. Parents started asking where and when I learned English, how long I had been teaching, some even deemed me inexperienced because I was young. They started devaluing me and making me feel like I did not belong there. The vast majority wondered how I was teaching English. What right did I have, as according to them I was not born into the English culture and thus knew nothing about it. While entirely confident before, I was slowly buying into these thoughts. I wondered, did I really belong there? What reaffirmed their thoughts even more so for me was when I would speak to family members back home about what I do. These family members did not seem to take me very seriously when I would say that I was an English teacher and would ask if knew English well enough now to understand everyone around me, completely undermining that at this point I had lived in Canada for 20+ years and held 2 university degrees. This attitude of parents, students, and even my family members surrounding me perpetuated NNEST anxiety within me; a sense of professional inadequacy that prevents qualified NNESTs from becoming confident instructors (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 42). I started second guessing my lessons and assignments, as well as any other instruction/directions which I gave the students. Simply put, my confidence started fading and in doing so, I started losing even more trust of students and parents, who had already decided that I do not in fact belong in this teaching role.

I had to decide whether I would completely abandon this teaching position or stay and re-establish myself as the English language amazing teacher that I deep down knew myself to be. In order to assert an identity

as legitimate professionals within the context of where they teach, NNESTs need to position themselves as equals/equally good (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 39). This was exactly what I had decided to do. I was going to challenge this myth and find my way out of this disempowering discourse. My plan was to *re-story* myself and through doing so to establish greater professional legitimacy. What was expected of me was to teach students grammar and English culture and for them to do well on standardized tests so that they could get into a good school. I realized that in teaching in such a way I was reverting back to my old methods of teaching Serbian school (where students were not engaged or interested) because I thought that this was what was expected of me. I asked myself what my main goal was in this teaching position. The answer was simple: It was the initial ideology with which I entered this classroom—for students to have ownership of their own learning. I started to employ a method which I use in my classes and that is free writing. I refer back to a previously mentioned statement in this paper and that is one that people understand their lives by narrating them and we all build our *storied selves* (Johnson & Golombek, 2018, p. 40). I wanted my students to build their storied selves in English class and get out of it something which was relevant to their day to day lives.

Personally, I take the Vigotskyian stance and believe that instruction is more efficient when students engage in activities within supportive learning environments and when they receive appropriate guidance that is mediated by tools (Kaur, 2014, p. 6). In order for students to be successful, they need to be allowed some free range and wiggle room within their education. Just like language, education too is a living and breathing being which has and continues to evolve over time. While most areas of school are a must, students need to be able to take ownership of any school-related/subject area where possible. I feel that writing is one of those areas. During my time in this school, I had witnessed a lot of set rules and very little student input in their learning. Students were expected to learn grammar rules and verb conjugations, but really no reasoning was provided for this expectation. This should not be the case. Allowing/encouraging free and independent writing in ESL classes as opposed to traditional structured writing encourages the evolution of the storied self which I previously mentioned. Students are able to take ownership of their learning and get something meaningful to them out of this process. To illustrate the difference between the two, an independent writing prompt might ask students to write a letter to a friend or to write a short story, while a structured prompt would be much more specific (Kaur, 2014, p. 3). It might sound something like, *Write a letter to your friend describing a day on the beach (use the given pictures and words as a guide)* (Kaur, 2014, p. 3).

There are a lot of benefits in teaching and encouraging free writing in ESL classes. One of the main benefits is that by doing so, students are able to develop personally meaningful ways of using language to learn (Kaur,

2014, p. 2). What this means is that students would have the opportunity to play around with language and take ownership of it. They would not be confined by the established structures how their teachers want them to write, but rather what they want to write about themselves. Most ESL teachers deem this process to be too difficult for ESL students, and as a result, there is tension between control and opportunity. Teachers set out a lot of rules and boundaries in language classes. They turn language into a confined and sterile process, as they themselves are not aware that language is a living and breathing entity. They set out structures, rules, tips, and a checklist of requirements of what they deem *good* and *proper* speaking and writing to be. In doing so, students begin to see language as some mathematical formula process which they have to follow, rather than the ever-changing and evolving thing that it actually is. Since students are not always given the opportunity to freely write and express themselves as they wish, they do not know how to do so, and on occasion that they do have the opportunity to take part in free writing or any other unstructured activity, they are hesitant to do so as they do not want to be wrong. As a result, this turns a lot of students away from language classes as they feel they do not *have the language formula down* and are not comfortable expressing themselves in oral or in written form. My goal was to make students pursue more language classes and to love language, and through the incorporation of free writing into my program I feel that I achieved this goal.

My ultimate goal as a language teacher was to step out of the disempowering discourse into which I was placed as a NNES teacher but also to help my students step out of the disempowering discourse of being molded to pass standardized English tests and to recite grammar rules. I want my students to be able to re-story themselves as well. I need them to become confident and assertive in their knowledge of English and not afraid to take risks in this learning process. Just like I as a language educator needed to come to know English as a living and breathing being, my students need to know the exact same thing. This is not math that they are learning (where they are confined to formulas and strict rules) but rather they are in a world of language, where the possibilities are endless and mistakes are accepted, and in fact encouraged at times. I now go back to my question from the beginning of my paper. What makes a competent language educator? I am not sure I still have a definite answer, but what I do have are parts of it, I believe. Very quickly I realized that it takes much more than knowing the language to be qualified to teach a language. A competent language teacher needs to understand language as being alive and everchanging and never static. But, more importantly a competent language educator needs to be able to transfer this philosophy onto their students. Having faced the NS myth in my teaching career was not a hindrance but actually a learning opportunity for me. I believe that it made me a better language teacher. Through finding a way out of this disempowering discourse, I was able to help my students re-story themselves through the implementation of free writing within my classroom. As a result, language became personal and thus meaningful for them. As I continue

on through my language teaching career, I am still constantly growing, expanding, and reshaping my knowledge and pedagogy along with my students, and that is exactly how it should be.

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Professionalism in TESL

By Mostafa Kosari, Canada

Abstract

This paper presents a discussion of what professionalism means in the workplace and how it can shape the relationship between the employees and the employee-employer relationship. The paper also hopes to promote the professional attitude and the high standards of professional behaviour expected of employees in the multicultural and *highly-competitive* ESL environment. A multicultural ESL teaching environment, like the one in Canada, might create some unwanted and unwelcomed conflicts among ESL teachers. Unwanted because it does not make sense for the highly-educated professionals to voluntarily cause conflict. Unwelcomed because no employer by any stretch of imagination should be aspiring to create a toxic workplace. Assuming that all employers have the best of intentions, all employees might not necessarily. This is humanly possible due to the highly competitive nature of ESL positions. To avoid the hopefully unwanted and hopefully unwelcomed conflicts, there seems to be only one solution: *professionalism.*

Working in the multicultural environment of ESL, with all its undeniable benefits for ESL teachers, might sometimes bring about conflict. To deny this fact will only make matters worse; while learning how to deal with it could enhance the relationship between the colleagues and result in optimal output for the employers. To achieve this goal, it is essential to delve into the root of the issue and familiarize oneself with the key elements.

Conflict

Conflict, in Longman Dictionary, is defined as "a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries, etc. (Longman). To shed more light on the issue of conflict, it would be a good idea to become familiar with Conflict Theory. "Conflict theory focuses on the competition between groups within society over limited resources. Conflict Theory views social and economic institutions as tools of the struggle between groups or classes, used to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class" (Hayes, 2020). According to this theory, social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by agreement and conformity. Therefore, a basic premise of Conflict Theory is that individuals and groups within society work in order to maximize their wealth and power. In this way, competition is the default. Being aware of the fact that laborers have little control in the economic system, their worth can diminish over time if the social and economic institutions decide to. When this happens, conflict is further aggravated.

Conflict in the ESL Market

The majority of ESL Teachers find it quite hard to get hired full time. It is a certainty. "Part-time-employed EAP practitioners reported balancing multiple jobs simultaneously, both within and outside the field" (Corcoran, 2021, p. 8). According to this research, only 50% of the instructors reported full-time employment. The research also mentions that the province of Ontario has "the highest rate of part-time, temporary contract, and partial-year employment of any region in the country" (Corcoran, 2021, p. 8). As a result, ESL Teachers find it hard to live on the amount of money they earn. This is enough to make them *potentially competitive* and unfriendly either when they are seeking a job or when they are in the workplace, after they have been hired. Unsurprisingly, this competitiveness can sometimes result in an antagonistic relationship between teachers in order to keep their job. For example, senior teachers, and sometimes even the juniors, might not welcome the newly-hired ones, or they might even resort to bullying and covert harassment in the workplace in the hope of making you quit.

"It is sad but true that the things people value most—good jobs, nice homes, high status—are always in short supply" (Baron, 2005, p. 166). Accepting the fact that resources are finite, it is a foregone conclusion that ESL Teachers must constantly struggle to get a full-time job. It is not surprising if this much struggle unlocks the potential for conflict. What makes matters worse is that history has proven that conflict is an unavoidable aspect of human nature; wars, violence, revolutions, discrimination, and injustice are the historical proofs. "As competition persists, the individuals or groups involved come to perceive each other in increasingly negative ways. Even worse, such competition often leads to direct and open conflict" (Baron, 2005, p. 167).

Functionalism

Unlike Conflict Theory that focuses on competition for scarce resources and how the elite control the poor and weak, which is hard to deny, functionalism focuses on the relationship between the parts of society. According to functionalism, "each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's functioning as a whole" (CliffsNotes).

Functionalism believes that society is held together by agreement. Members of the society can work together to achieve what is best for society as a whole. However, functionalism does not encourage people to change their social environment even if it is not equitable. To put it simply, what functionalism encourages is *interdependence* with a clear understanding of power dynamics.

Functionalism in the ESL Market

Apparently, corporations are the advocates of Conflict Theory; they tend to dominate and make profit. Interestingly, at the same time, they expect their employees to pick functionalism and avoid conflict. It seems that they want their employees to agree that this is the best possible way for both to benefit. This is because employers would like to make huge profits by controlling the labourers' wage and expect the workers to be satisfied and pay more attention to contribution to the business and society as a whole. In other words, to be functional.

In a nutshell, employers do not like complaints. Labourers, on the other hand, try to earn as much money as possible to be able to live on the salary. However, this will cause conflict if the labourers do not adapt to the employers' financial policies. Consequently, they will either end up losing their job or end up making constant departures and arrivals in the career. So, to stay and work in the competitive and multicultural market of ESL, teachers are required to be professionally functional or functionally professional.

Professionalism

To be professional, from the researcher's point of view and personal experience, means to put the *rules and regulations* of the profession first. Every profession has its own ethics and principles. Following these principles will definitely bring about mutual benefits for the employer and the employees.

It is very easy for each one of us to be affected by personal biases when we are at work. These personal biases that derive from our earlier years when we were raised in our family and influenced by our society could easily affect our decision-making process at work. For example, in interacting with a colleague, these prejudices could make us react, and not *respond*, in a way that is not considered professional. According to Realistic Conflict Theory, "prejudice stems from competition among social groups over valued commodities

or opportunities. In short, prejudice develops out of the struggle over jobs, adequate housing, good schools, and other desirable outcomes" (Baron, 2005, p. 166).

Professionals should learn to manage their *emotions* and gain awareness of their emotional triggers so they can manage their reactions and respond positively and productively. Unconsciously, a decision is usually likely to be made based on personal beliefs and experiences rather than on the principles of the workplace. Thus, a professional is someone who can overcome their biases and regulate their feelings at work and decide instead to perform according to the professional musts. "In an office environment, it's important to be thoughtful when it comes to your interactions" (University of Massachusetts Global, 2020).

To avoid conflict, professionals should try practicing *respect*. As mentioned by Herrity (2020), respect is "treating people with appreciation and dignity". As stated by Baron (2005), in the book titled Frustration and Aggression, it is suggested by several psychologists that "aggression often stems from frustration—interference with goal-directed behaviour" (p. 167). "Team members will not necessarily like or admire the personalities of their supervisors or coworkers, but they still need to act respectfully on the job to achieve their goals and be professional" (Herrity, 2020). To practice respect, professionals are always aware of their words and actions in the workplace and how they might affect their teammates.

A professional should know that people have the right to have different opinions. In other words, "we cannot predict an individual's identity, beliefs, or values based on categories like race, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, etc.; instead, we must recognize that individuals are capable of claiming membership to a variety of different (and oftentimes seemingly contradictory) categories and belief systems regardless of the identities outsiders attempt to impose upon them" (Purdue Online Writing Lab). If workers, and employers, reach this understanding, the result would then be respect, which in turn can lead to *collaboration*.

Professionals can enhance the output of a profession by collaboration. Nobody can ignore that two minds work better than one. This understanding can also result in building relationship with colleagues. Professional workers are those who have reached the maturity that let them mute their personal biases and care for the feelings of their counterparts while displaying their self-confidence. In other words, a professional is someone who has their self-confidence but at the same time show concern for the *feelings* of their colleagues and does not try to make others look bad.

Conclusion

To avoid conflict, a professional worker can focus on one important principle at work: *respect*. Living and working in a multicultural society requires a great amount of respect if we all want to work as a *functional team* without conflict.

Professionals respect the rules and obligations that are nothing but the principles that aim at benefits for the business and the workers simultaneously, even if these benefits might not seem proportional to the latter's hard work.

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Author Bio

Upon arrival in Canada, Mostafa started working as a security guard to make ends meet. Having an MA in English Language and Literature and 15 years experience in teaching EFL, he worked his way up and got into the ESL market to follow his passion professionally. After losing his job at the outbreak of COVID, he took the opportunity to do vocations including working as an enumerator for Statistics Canada, working as a dock helper, and working as a grocery clerk for Loblaws to make contributions to the community. Mostafa is currently a nursing student at George Brown College.

Learner variability in English for Academic Purposes classes

By Andreia Arai-Rissman, George Brown College & Seneca College, Canada

As educators, we may often hear the term learner variability, especially when working with English for Academic Purposes (EAP) because classes consist of learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Before I delve into defining learner variability, I invite you to take a moment to reflect on yourself as a learner at a specific time in your life and ask yourself these questions: How old were you then? Which language(s) were spoken in your home? Which specific cultures do you think may have contributed to shaping your behaviours or activities as you grew up? How did your personal life affect your learning performance? Do you think you learned the same way as your peers did—by using the same strategies or taking the same amount of time, etc.? If you think you learned differently, what made you unique compared to your classmates? The responses to these questions may indicate some factors or characteristics that contribute to understanding learner variability. While the concept of learner variability can be studied to identify solely student needs to support student learning, Pape (2018) defined learner variability as how individuals are different from each other and how it encompasses both learner strengths and needs. Learner variability can fall into the following categories: cognitive, social-emotional, and academic (CAST, 2022b). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) addresses learner variability to foster inclusivity in the classroom (CAST, 2022a).

At this point, I would like you to think about the classes you have been facilitating. What factors related to cognitive, social-emotional, and academic skills can you observe or infer? This includes age range, first language, learning styles, personality traits, cultural background, prior learning, and academic readiness. How about the traits that are *invisible*? Some students may have health issues that negatively affect their learning performance. Some students, especially in EAP programs, may have learning disabilities, and these may go undiagnosed due to linguistic or cultural barriers. Also, students may be part of minorities. An example of a minority that I encountered recently in my class was of a student who was in a women's shelter with her child. These invisible traits will be unknown to educators unless shared by the student, but all of these factors play a role in how students relate to learning. It is crucial that learner variability be considered

the norm instead of the exception in classes, mainly in such diverse environments such as EAP.

Learner variability becomes multi-faceted in some contexts. To demonstrate how complex learner variability can be, an area worth emphasizing is culture. As Chita-Tegmark et al. (2011) stated, "culture informs all aspects of learning, from high-level reasoning skills to perceptual habits" (p. 17). However, there are so many variables within a culture. For example, people from the same culture may be divided by their socio-economic classes, gender segregation, or political affiliations. Immigration also plays a role in making culture a multi-faceted learner variability. For example, I was born in Brazil, but my first language was Japanese. Then, I moved to Canada and have lived here for almost half of my life. My cultural identity is not singular; it is plural. Culture greatly influences an individual's values, personal preferences, and perceptions; variations exist even within a single country and are different per individual. Thus, learner variability is not static; viewpoints and experiences continue to change, and they affect students' relationship with learning.

As educators, we can close our eyes and pretend that the one-size-fits-all teaching approach works, or we can open our eyes to the trend of identifying learner variability present in classrooms. The trend shows that there is a real need for facilitating pedagogical frameworks that account for learner variability and designing courses that differentiate learning to increase accessibility and engagement in all courses. First, we can embrace learner variability and address it in our classes. Next, we can bring different narratives to the class, so students can have exposure to similar life journeys being portrayed. Providing opportunities for students to share events that shaped their views and preferences that influence their learning allow students to connect on a personal level to the content and it helps with humanizing the curriculum making learning more relevant to each individual and it fosters long-lasting learning outcomes. Lastly, we can utilize UDL principles to address learner variability (refer to: https://udlguidelines.cast.org/). Revising the questions in the first two paragraphs and reflecting on the response can be essential to identifying and addressing learner variability to support student success in such a diverse environment as EAP classes.

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