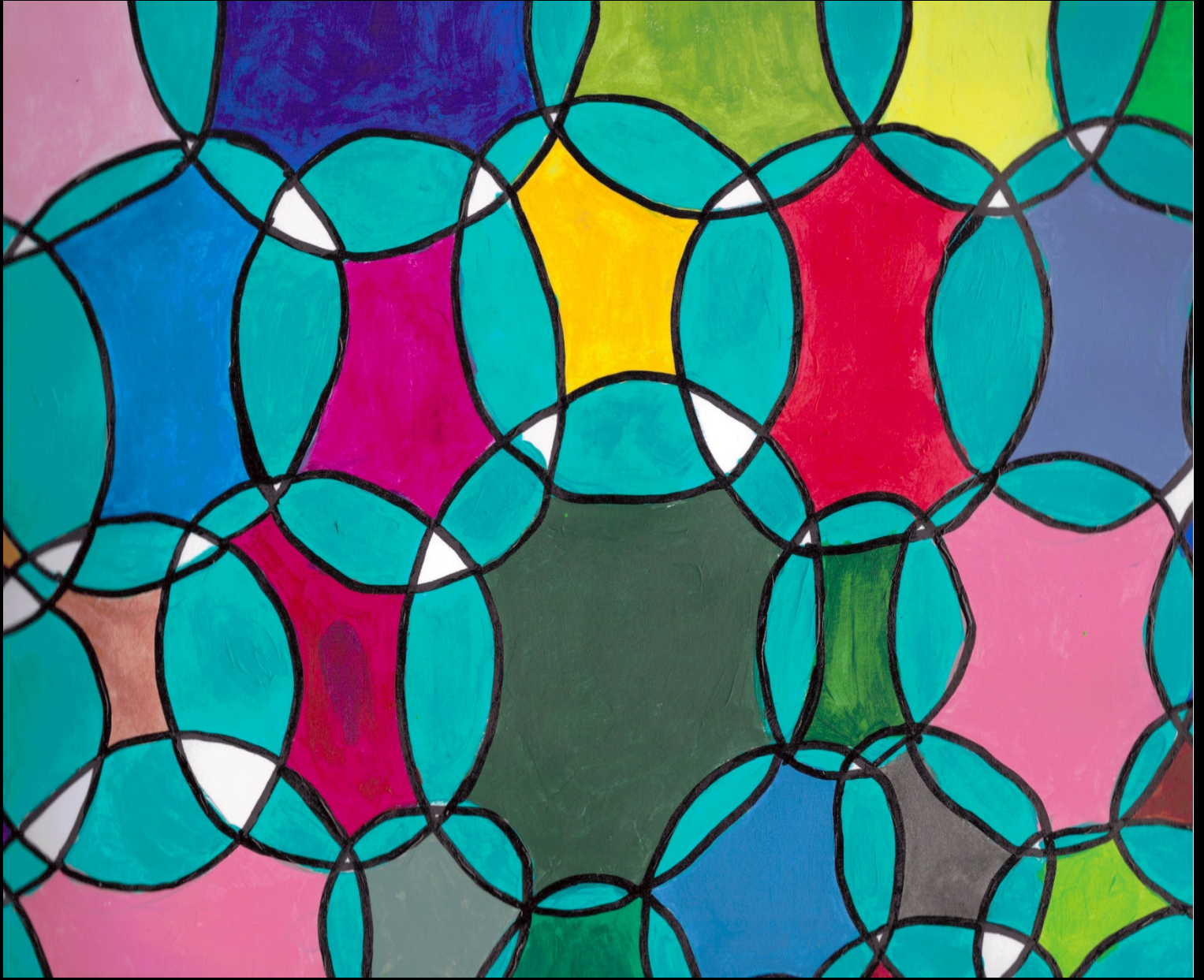


Every Teacher is a Language Teacher



Volume 1

Heba Elsherief and **Mimi Masson** (Editors)

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By University of Ottawa Second Language Education Cohort (cL2c)

www.cl2cuottawa.ca



University of Ottawa
Faculty of Education
145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Private
Ottawa, Ontario K1N6N5

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Introduction

It is under strange circumstances that we write the introduction to this inaugural issue of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education Professional Learning Community (PLC) Workshops for teacher candidates in their first year of the Bachelor of Education program. Back in January 2020 when the workshops presented here occurred, participants and presenters could not have had an inkling as to what lay ahead in the weeks and months to come. The challenges to our work and personal lives with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic have been unprecedented. It has impacted everything we did and have continued to do as the year has progressed and, as educators, we have had to adapt and demonstrate a behavioral flexibility that we anticipate will continue into the new academic year and beyond.

This issue is the result of the annual event *Every Teacher is a Language Teacher PLC Workshops* held at the Faculty of Education (at the University of Ottawa) for all first-year Bachelor of Education teacher candidates. For the past two years, the Second Language Education cohort (cL2c) has organized a day of workshops embodying both language learning theory and practical methods and strategies that teacher candidates can immediately implement in their classrooms. The theme of the workshop day is meant to give those entering the field of teaching the understanding and philosophy that will shape their interactions with students who might need *more* when it comes to language instruction... But the workshops on that day are also meant to encourage teacher candidates (especially those in traditional subjects that don't emphasize the direct impact language has on learning and instruction) to re-evaluate and critically reflect on the 'make or break' influence of language in its many iterations and 'genres' that will impact their practice, no matter if they're a Grade 1 homeroom teacher or a Grade 10 science teacher. Organizers of the conference hope that the day will be beneficial to all and feedback has consistently been positive. This book responds directly to calls from attendees for a resource that synthesizes the content shared at each workshop, enabling them to access and implement the rich pedagogical knowledge shared.

We had always planned on publishing a resource for those teacher candidates unable to physically be in attendance and for our own classes in the teacher education program, both at the University of Ottawa and beyond. When we initially sent out the call to presenters for this publication, we stressed that ours would not be a call for academic chapters in the traditional sense, rather we hoped that chapters would bring people into the proverbial workshop room. We wanted contributions to read as if the reader was participating in the workshop itself. And as you'll read, the authors absolutely delivered.

In their chapter, *Creative Multimodal Poetry and Spoken Word Activities to Support Multilingual English Language Learners in K-12 Classroom*, Burton, Wong, and Rajendram provide multimodal strategies to be used with English Language Learners (ELLs). The strategies centre around poetry and spoken word creation and the authors brilliantly offer both the impetus for such content, discussing the ethical and supportive

value of translinguaging pedagogy for students, as well as show us specifically what it looks like via a “I am From” multilingual poetry exercise to be used with students. The authors reflect on the learnings gleaned from the workshop day by providing teacher candidates’ “exit card” takeaways and the sense that if even they, as teacher candidate students, could feel represented and engaged in the work, they were sure it would be great for their students to do the same as well. There is a workshop rich in ideas to adapt the exercise, both in terms of technology and changing the subject matter. The chapter offers specific applications that we haven’t personally used before but moreover, it also discusses the presenters’ learnings after the workshop—proof that all of us, candidates and teacher educators who might not be in the classroom with younger students as much, must still reflect on best practices and how we use language education to benefit the students.

In the chapter, *Teachers as Status Experts: Lessons from Keith Johnstone’s Improv and Status Teachings*, Retzlaff further takes the notion of teacher candidates’ ongoing awareness with regard to presenting a body language that physically communicates to students our desire to be facilitators who will help them overcome barriers. By redefining and expanding what language is and how we use it, and by borrowing from the field of theatre and drama, workshop attendees were able to learn about how the techniques can engender more socially equitable classrooms that are centered around community building. The author discusses the work of Keith Johnstone around improvisation and how ‘status’ is something we communicate to our students regardless of how aware of it we are. The chapter delves into how having an awareness of it can improve engagement with students and how said engagement would then help them better communicate their learning and motivations about their own learning. Retzlaff describes the exercises in her workshop and how they prompted attendees to quickly make meaningful connections. The explanations demonstrate how ‘social awareness’ is enacted with real life examples and descriptions of specific physical language and roleplaying techniques are provided. Retzlaff ends the chapter by emphasizing the value of performative pedagogy and the way it may disrupt more traditional (and oftentimes barrier inducing) classroom dynamics.

Masson’s chapter, *What’s ART got to do with it? The Power of Drawing to Commit New Language and Concepts to Memory* further engages in the notion that teacher candidates should have the means to disrupt traditional teaching methods. Masson stresses that when it comes to ELLs, the language engaged by artistic expression is powerful, but all students would benefit from it, particularly in a subject or within course content areas that call on memorization skills. Explaining the difference between receptive knowledge and productive knowledge, Masson links within that dichotomy the emotional impetus that art calls on us to make. The description of the workshop demonstrates how between the teacher candidates and those roleplaying ‘learners’ there was an underscoring of the value of art for student learning and its potential to make the content feel like it is highly personalized to them, and thus more meaningful and memorable. Masson stresses that art in the classroom isn’t about the production of aesthetically appealing works but rather understanding the potential of it to draw on multiple intelligences and to help students feel like their expressions of it in this form are valued and that is the most beautiful thing. Multiliteracies and divergent modes of engagement are absolutely what

all students need to flourish in strange circumstances. And student focused learning.

In their chapter titled, *Integrating First Languages in the Classroom to Help Facilitate Student Success*, Burchell, Al Janaideh, Raymond, Baddour, and Chen give readers entry into their research. They provide a great primer to language immersion programs in Canada and what that means for the additional language teaching and development with regard to refugee and immigrant students. The authors facilitate a discussion on what pedagogical strategies and philosophical stances might best help teachers help their students struggling to adapt to their new school settings because of language barriers. In this chapter, a case study is presented to highlight the roles teachers can play in an individual's language development timelines. Further, we think that the chapter takeaways gleaned from teacher candidate participants that day are especially salient and have given us personally much fodder for reflection. One teacher candidate stressed that, "It is not ok to tell children to leave their language and culture at the classroom door" and though the sentiment seems simple enough, it is absolutely profound in recognizing how much we must do to consistently allow spaces for students' funds of knowledge to contribute to their learning and those of their peers'.

Finally, Elsherief's chapter, titled *Seize the pen! Encouraging Writing Practice Across the Curriculum*, identifies writing anxiety, also known as "writer's block," as a barrier to student writing and explores a strategy developed from the world of creative writing to help students who struggle with writing tasks across the curriculum. Many workshop participants empathize with their students' writing anxiety for they too struggle with it. Elsherief explains that by thinking about writing tasks via two modes (the writing brain vs. the editing brain), teachers can help their students navigate any perceived paralysis around writing anxiety while still giving students the content they need to succeed in their writing tasks. Using the first mode, students are encouraged to write without inhibition or fear of judgement and may 'break rules' of grammar and structure as they do. The teacher comes when there is a draft to help students shape their raw pieces (second mode) by modeling the prescribed methods and accepted structures of the subject matter they are teaching. The goal of this strategy is the flourishing of student voice by empowering them to move past barriers to the expression of their voices in written form.

In many ways our lives and those of our students' have been irrevocably altered this year. But that does not necessarily have to be a bad thing, particularly when it comes to thinking about the kinds of barriers that we have had to deal with to deliver our courses, then using those experiences to reflect on barriers our students have had to face. Beyond the issues that the year 2020 has brought to the forefront, many of us educators would agree that moving forward in the new academic year will not only require conscientious planning but also a deeper awareness of equity issues that have long been disruptive to our students. To be good educators, we will need to harness our empathy practices and seek more socially just ways to deliver content and help all our students to flourish despite barriers. As teachers, we want to help students overcome barriers and we believe that the chapters in this book aspire to that. We hope that this book inspires your practice, as teacher educators, as well.

In fact, we strongly believe in the relevance of this book as a textbook for teacher education courses. As a textbook, it can prepare 21st century teachers to wield language as a tool to support their students. It also has potential for use in graduate courses. As a minimum, it showcases research-based practices created by University of Ottawa Faculty of Education partners, faculty, and graduate students alike, that should be shared more widely, particularly in its bilingual format. We anticipate that this publication will have a significant impact on future teachers because it offers modes of practice based on both research and theory. This means it is neither exclusively a lesson plan nor a theoretical analysis, but rather a synthesis that aims to show how the two domains inform one another. We see it as being immediately relevant for Faculty of Education classes generally, while specifically filling a gap in the field of language education—one that embodies anti-racist, ethical paradigms within current interdisciplinary practice to respond to the challenges of modern technology and globalization.

Our heartfelt thanks to all the contributors in this book (bios follow), to Stephanie Arnott whose relentless work makes this possible, and to research assistant Carol Lee whose conscientious copyediting and publishing knowledge has been invaluable.

Language Teachers in Solidarity,
Second Language Cohort (cL2c)

Heba Elsherief and Mimi Masson

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Creative Multimodal Poetry and Spoken Word Activities: Supporting Multilingual English Language Learners in K-12 Classrooms

Jennifer Burton, Wales Wong,
Shakina Rajendram

University of Toronto/ OISE

Abstract

This chapter introduces three research-based creative writing workshops conducted for teacher candidates at the University of Ottawa to help prepare them to support multilingual English Language Learners (ELL) in K-12 classrooms. These workshops aimed to provide teacher candidates with multimodal strategies for developing content and language in ELL learners. The modes covered included media, technology, hands-on activities, and reflective discussions. The central theme of the workshops—poetry—also introduced teacher candidates to new forms of poetry such as creative multimodal poetry and spoken word activities in support of the workshops’ aims. This chapter outlines the workshops’ structure and explains how the following activities were used: multilingual poetry, ScribJab, spoken word poetry. An analysis of the workshops based on some key findings from our Exit-Ticket survey follows. In this survey, teacher candidates were asked to reflect on how they could apply what they learned in the workshops to their work with ELLs. The conclusion reflects on the authors’ experiences as workshop facilitators and offers recommendations for educators intending to implement these activities in their own contexts.

Keywords: spoken word, poetry, translanguaging, multilingual, multimodal, teacher education, English Language Learners

Creative Multimodal Poetry and Spoken Word Activities

The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in classrooms across Canada make for rich teaching and learning environments between and among teachers and students. However, the rich potential of these experiences may not be realized if teachers are unfamiliar with ways to support multilingual English language learners (ELLs) in their mainstream classrooms. One of the six principles of teaching ELLs in mainstream classrooms is that “ELLs will learn more effectively in a safe, welcoming classroom environment that does not generate anxiety about performing in English” (Cummins & Early, 2015, p. 13). Teachers can create this environment by designing activities where the focus for learners is not on linguistic accuracy in English or French, but on expressing meaning using all the languages available to them. In welcoming ELLs’ home languages into the classroom, teachers affirm students’ identity. This simple act tells students that who they are—their identities, their cultures, and their languages—matter. As Cummins and Early (2011) write, multilingual activities “hold a mirror up to the students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light” (p. 3). When learners see their identities reflected in a positive way in the classroom, they are often more engaged and invested in their learning.

Using activities that incorporate all the languages in the learners’ repertoires also scaffolds their learning (Daniel, Jiménez, Pray & Pacheco, 2019). Scaffolding is often used to describe the support that teachers provide to enable learners to perform academic tasks. An ELL’s home language is an important cognitive scaffolding tool for teachers to use. From a cognitive perspective, language learners consciously use a variety of mental strategies to make connections between their first language and the additional language that they are learning (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). This is why insisting that ELL learners use only the target language in the classroom is counter-productive; it may actually deprive them of a very useful cognitive tool that helps them learn the new language more effectively.

A pedagogy in which students’ home languages are used as a cognitive tool to scaffold student learning and affirm student identity is called a *translanguaging pedagogy*. Translanguaging is the process by which a learner uses all the languages in their linguistic repertoire, be it for speaking, reading, writing, or thinking. A translanguaging pedagogy respects the diverse linguistic practices of learners and values these practices as resources the teacher should draw on and use in the classroom. The design of strategic plans that are informed by learners’ diverse language practices and ways of knowing allow teachers to make moment-to-moment changes in class to meet students’ linguistic needs (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017). In our creative writing and speaking workshop for Bachelor of Education students, aimed at supporting ELLs, we draw on translanguaging pedagogy. The design of our workshop also draws on our collective experience working with ELLs of various ages in diverse classroom contexts, our training as language education researchers, and our collective passion for creative multimodal activities. As with all learning and teaching, this workshop has evolved in response to student needs. With this in mind, we encourage teachers to take creative risks in their classrooms and adapt these suggestions to suit and serve the needs of their current students.

In the following sections of this chapter, we 1) share a description of our workshop; 2) highlight participants' reflections of their experiences shared in the workshop and indicated in their workshop Exit Ticket survey; 3) discuss our experiences as co-presenters; and 4) end with a summary that includes suggestions for educators leading ELL workshops, and for teachers using this material in their classes.

Workshop Description

In our workshops, participants learned research-based multimodal creative writing approaches to support multilingual ELLs in K-12 classrooms. The workshop combined a variety of modes including media, technology, hands-on activities, and reflective discussions to engage participants in activities that scaffold the language development of their learners across content areas. While the three of us worked together to create these activities, we presented the workshop at two different times. Wales Wong and Shakina Rajendram presented this workshop in 2019 to three cohorts with the Multilingual Poetry and ScribJab activities as the focus of each 50 minutes presentation. Jennifer Burton presented the same workshop in 2020 to two cohorts, adding a Spoken Word Poetry (SWP) component to the workshop and extending its length to 90 minutes.

Multilingual Poetry

Multilingual poetry offers students opportunities to translanguage and work creatively with two or more languages. While this activity affirms student identity, creating multilingual poems allows students to express thoughts and ideas without the fear of making technical errors such as grammar mistakes. Students can also reveal aspects of their cultural identity and upbringing, should they choose to, in a creative safe space. For this activity, we created a poem template titled "I Am From." (See Appendix A.) We adapted our template from one used by George Ella Lyon's (1999) in her poetry-workshop book for teachers and students. Ivanova (2019) suggests that writing assignments like the "I Am From" poem supports English as a Second Language (ESL) students' sense of belonging, their writing skills, and their academic success. As part of scaffolding for language learning, the teacher can also use these poems to teach the mechanics of language such as phonetics, parts of speech, and punctuation. For lesson planning, the template and lesson can be adapted for thematic units or different subjects as an in-class activity or as an assignment.

Before asking workshop participants to create their own poem using the template, we showed them our "I Am From" poems as exemplars and as discussion pieces for them to know more about us. (See Appendix B.) We read our poems aloud and each of us selected a few lines to explain what we wrote and the intentions behind it. Jennifer began her poem with Regina 에서 왔습니다 "I am from Regina" and asked the teacher candidates to guess the language she used and why she began with Regina followed by the object. This allowed teacher candidates to recognize that not all languages follow the same subject+verb+object word order like English. Jennifer highlighted the words 'spice, nice', 'wheat, feet' and 'ponds, bonds' in her poem so that participants could identify rhyming words. She also highlighted 'big beautiful blue' to have them identify alliteration. Wales chose to fill in some parts of her poem with elements of the Chinese

language recognizable by English-speaking Canadians and by incorporating traditional characters such as her family name in the line “I am from dim sum Sundays and Chinese New Year’s dinners, from the 黃 family.” She also used the phonetic spelling of a common Chinese greeting in the line “I am from Cantonese and ‘Nay ho ma?’” Some students may not be able to write in a home language, so writing the words or phrases phonetically allows them to include their languages in the text. Shakina talked about how using the Tamil word for *grandmother* (அம்மம்மா) in the line “The fragrance of those leaves filled அம்மம்மா’s kitchen with the sweetest aroma as she cooked us dinner” brought back fond memories of her time with her grandmother. She used this example to show the teacher candidates how the use of one’s home languages can evoke emotional responses. These explanations provided examples to help teacher candidates respond to the prompts on the template handout.

Next, we then invited the participants to complete their own “I Am From” poem. We gave them 5 minutes to do this and suggested they integrate any language or mode of communication (e.g., visuals or symbols). Participants were then invited to read their poems aloud to each other in small groups. These readings sparked brief discussions on the poet’s cultural identity, his/her language use, and about how the activity could inspire creativity in their own students. As a whole group, we asked participants to identify how they might use this activity in their classrooms for teaching specific concepts within their teachables or with students of a specific age group. One attendee suggested that the prompts could be changed to address subject-specific vocabulary for science or math. Another attendee recommended the poem be used to teach poetic devices such as rhymes and metaphors. In addition to these suggestions, this activity can be used to scaffold specific writing skills or assist in developing skills, such as brainstorming, at different stages of the writing process.

Sample Lesson Plan

To support the teacher candidates, we created a sample lesson plan for a grades 6-7 class adhering to the Ontario Curriculum for Language. (See Appendix C.) We outlined the following steps in our lesson plan:

Activating Prior Knowledge. The teacher recites a poem to the class to activate prior knowledge so that students can make connections to the text. The teacher asks them to identify text type, elements in a poem, and poems they know (in English or in their home language).

Modelling the Process. The teacher shows the “I Am From” poem template. As a class, they complete the poem together with the teacher giving examples.

Write the Poem. Students create their own poems. The teacher encourages them to be creative and to use different colours when they write in a different language.

Present the Poem. Ask students to share their poems with a partner or with the class. Students listen for use of other languages in students’ poems and identify linguistic features that may be different than English.

Summary. Summarize key points from the lesson and display students' poems around the class.

Homework. Students who have not completed their poems can work on their poems at home. They can get their parents/family members to help them with their home languages.

Adapting the Template to Different Stages of the Writing Process

The creation of a multilingual poem can serve many purposes at different stages of writing. These steps illustrate how teachers can guide students through the writing process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

ScribJab

ScribJab¹ was created by Kelleen Toohey and Diane Dagenais, two Simon Fraser University language researchers. We introduced this resource as another way to adapt the multilingual poetry activity into a visual and audio narrative. Dagenais, Toohey, Fox & Singh (2017) assert that “recent scholarship on multimodality stresses the importance of understanding how diverse semiotic resources combine or assemble for various communicative purposes” (p. 267). With that in mind, ScribJab is a multimodal tool that offers an alternative way to conceptualize poetry by using sounds and images in a digital space (Newfield & D’Abdon, 2015).

ScribJab is a digital resource that can be used on its website or with iPad application. Language learners can create their own digital stories in multiple languages as digital dual-language books or read the stories of others. Not only do these dual-language books promote the use of multiple languages in storytelling, but they also promote intergenerational learning when students reach out to family members to help them create these stories or to share them. While it was designed for K-9 students, particularly those in Canadian heritage language programs, it can also be used for grades 9-12. These digital dual-language books can validate students’ home language(s) in the classroom, which in turn can affirm students’ identities.

The website has a video tutorial² that we showed a clip of to illustrate how teachers can use this resource. As teachers, they can register for a teacher account and then create groups for their students. This step is similar to having a private virtual classroom where they can approve students’ work before books are available to the rest of the group or on the website. Students can read and listen to books in more than 80 languages. There is an entire database of books by students from all over the world, and they can search for books by languages, keywords, or titles. They can also bookmark their favourite stories or save them to their own library.

In our workshop we showed teacher candidates how students can add text to their digital stories. We also demonstrated the different functions of ScribJab including the audio recording function that can be done in two languages. We used a project created by Wales for her “I Am From” multilingual poem that contained an illustration corresponding to one line of the poem, and containing an audio recording that when selected allows readers to hear Wales reading her poem.

Spoken Word Poetry

This section of the presentation was created and delivered by Jennifer. Spoken word poetry (SWP) is a poetic word art form that blurs the boundaries between written and oral language (Burton, 2019). SWP, as a genre, can potentially bring words to life. Teachers can use this form of expression in their classroom, even if they are not spoken word artists themselves. As Hirsch & Macleroy (2020) indicate, “Foregrounding spoken word and multilingualism in the English classroom had a transformative effect on young people’s self-expression and imaginative thinking” (p. 41). Additionally, with SWP “dialects, languages and cultures are listened to, valued and explored” (Macleroy, 2015, p. 186).

When introducing SWP in any classroom or workshop, I begin by asking students or participants questions I would like them to try to answer while watching a SWP video performance. In the workshop, I asked teacher candidates to make observations about SWP as it relates to (oral) language. In a classroom, I simply ask ELL students to prepare for the video by asking themselves *what do I see?*, *what do I hear*, and *what do I feel?* After sharing a spoken word video about an Iranian woman negotiating her multiple identities as an immigrant in Canada,³ I participated with the class in an open discussion on SWP. Then, I led the discussion towards the following questions:

1. What is the purpose/point of SWP?
2. How do I speak so that people want to listen?
3. What makes a spoken word performance effective?

The questions are designed to probe distinctions between SWP and other ways of communicating and expressing meaning. The most notable features of SWP that distinguish it are its attention to body language, such as, eye contact, gestures, posture, and its attention to voice modulation, including volume, tempo, and articulation. After participants considered these questions and were to identify SWP characteristics, I asked them to think about activities and games they could do with their students to get them comfortable performing their poems.

Performing SWP may be an anxiety-inducing experience for some students, particularly students who identify as introverts, so it is important that teachers foster an environment that allows students to safely take risks and step outside of their comfort zones in ways that do not center the attention on anyone in particular. One of the ways I have done this in my teaching practice is to have a large group of student pairs face each other from opposite ends of the classroom and simultaneously read one line of their poem *fast*, then the next line *slow*, followed by *quiet*, and then *loud*, while taking one step forward with each line. When I ask students to do this exercise, they naturally add body movement to their words, but also practice voice modulation and line memorization without thinking too much about it. Because all of the students do this together, focus and attention is not placed on any one individual.

At the workshop, we wrapped up our SWP activities by reviewing the principles of multilingual activities to underscore the importance of using multilingual activities in the classroom. We considered the following:

- Representation: We want learners to know that the languages, language skills, and the identities attached to their linguistic and cultural background are valued and represented in the classroom (Cummins & Early, 2011).
- Participation: We want learners to know that they can take risks and participate in activities regardless of their level of proficiency. We want them to know that our focus will be on developing participation before accuracy which hopefully will lead to student confidence-building (Cummins, 2007).
- Flexibility: We want both teachers and learners to know that while it may be a challenge for teachers to conduct multilingual activities when they do not know the languages that their students speak/write, these activities provide opportunities for both students and teachers to learn new vocabulary. For example, teachers can learn new words from their students' language poems while students can learn a different set; both develop skills that help students learn the target lesson (García & Li Wei, 2014; Kleyn, 2016).

At the conclusion of our presentation, we invited attendees to ask questions or to share their reflections on the activities. In the most recent workshop, we also provided a link to a Google form for participants to complete. We called this form the Exit Ticket.

Workshop Participants' Reflections

We asked for feedback about the workshop from the teacher candidates via the Exit Ticket at the end of our presentation. The form prompted participants to answer with the following questions:

1. What is something you learned in today's workshop that you can take with you into your classroom and apply to your ELLs?
2. I have a question (or wonder) about...
3. Anything else you'd like to say?

Several of the participants highlighted their newfound understanding of the possibilities of poetry in general and of spoken word poetry in particular as a tool for facilitating language learning with ELLs. One participant⁴ stated that "Language can be taught in many ways - not just through translating via dictionaries". Another participant thought their students would "really benefit and enjoy" SWP. Another participant elaborated further:

I LOVED applying poetry to ELLs. I have heard before about valuing languages other than English in our classrooms but assumed that we should stick with the "basics". Before this workshop I could have said that poetry is too complicated a concept and might confuse ELL's, but after today I understand that it's an incredible tool we can use to actually help.

Some responses indicated an appreciation of our examples of the *I Am From* poem and the *ScribJab* application. Another Exit Ticket response addressed language-related

aspects, such as, an understanding of the importance of language as “communicating meaning” over a rigid focus on “spelling and syntax,” the benefits of translanguaging for *all* students, and the meaning of translanguaging. One final response we want to share was from a participant who provided examples of how they might apply the concepts learned in this workshop to their geography class:

I can ask the kids to name the geographical features such as mountains in different languages and then discuss why that might be in comparison to where (what part of the world) that name for mountain is used. This can expand on the discussion about different properties of geographical features around the world.

From our point of view, participants actively engaged in each workshop and in each of the planned breakout discussions throughout our presentation. Several teacher candidates came up to us after the workshop to ask specific questions related to the content of our presentation or to share first-hand experiences teaching ELLs in Canada or abroad. One student thanked Jennifer for including a racialized hijabi woman as the SWP example, saying (and we paraphrase) “If this is how I feel when you included someone that looks like me in this workshop, then I can’t imagine how my students will feel in my classroom when I include their languages and cultures.” This comment beautifully captured a result we aimed for with our workshop, that being, to increase teachers’ awareness in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Added to this, ELL students should never be positioned by teachers or other classmates as the “token” representatives of their particular language or culture (García-Sánchez & Orellana, 2019). Teachers should ensure that students only share what they feel comfortable sharing. A teacher candidate shared with us after the workshop that there were difficult experiences from her immigration journey that she included in her “I Am From” poem but would not feel comfortable sharing with anyone. Therefore, while teachers create spaces for students to showcase their diversity, teachers simultaneously need to respect students’ agentic choice and right to pass.

Presenters’ Reflections

In this final section, we collectively reflect on themes that emerged from our experiences, and we offer tips to educators who wish to implement these activities in their own classrooms. In highlighting the following themes, we provide contextual information about the workshop from our perception and offer rationale for decision making around our activities to offer insight into what it might have been like to be a participant in our workshop. The themes are creative adaptation, technology integration, praxis, teacher candidate and learner identity, and learner engagement and student investment.

Creative Adaptation

The teacher candidates in all our workshops were enthusiastic and spent a lot of time working on their own poems. Many of them enjoyed talking about the reasons for what

they wrote in their poems. The discussions following the poetry activities were fruitful because teacher candidates tapped into their language learning experiences and teaching practices to think about how they could adapt the activities for their classes.

Technology Integration

We spent less time on the ScribJab part of the workshop because we wanted to give teacher candidates enough time to practice, reflect, and share their experiences with each activity. We showed them an example of a digital “I Am From” poem that Wales created using Scribjab, but had more time permitted and if we had access to iPads and laptops, it would have been beneficial for the teacher candidates to try creating their own poem using the app.

Tip: Educators who would like to integrate technology into their multilingual poetry and spoken word workshops should consider allocating more time for the session or consider having two sessions. We also suggest that participants be given a choice of apps with which to create their texts; some choices might include, Pixton, MyStoryBook, Powtoon, Flipgrid, and Adobe Spark.

Praxis: Linking Theory and Practice

As both researchers and practitioners, we believe in theoretically-sound research-based pedagogical practices to support ELL teaching. The relationship between theory and practice is a reciprocal one; theory should inform practice and practice should inform theory. Thus, when presenting to a practitioner audience, it is important to explain the rationale for the decisions informing our pedagogical design. In our workshop, rather than presenting theoretically dense material to teacher candidates, we asked them to think about their own linguistic practices and language resources, and used the examples they provided to help them deduce the meaning of words like *translanguaging*. We also supplied tangible examples of translanguaging by presenting our own “I Am From” poems and examples of SWP which included the use of diverse languages. When students were able to see examples of how translanguaging was integrated into our lesson, they were able to think about how theory could inform their teaching practice, and how teaching informs theory.

Tip: To bridge the gap between translanguaging theory and practice, we recommend that educators use multilingual activities and resources in the classroom, in unit designs and in lesson plans that draw on the diverse language practices of their learners (Burton & Rajendram, 2019). We also recommend that teachers identify translanguaging objectives for each of their lessons to provide guided opportunities for translanguaging across the content areas.

Teacher Candidate and Learner Identity

Activities produce writings and performances which reflect the identities of the learners. So much of one’s own experiences, culture, and understanding of the world are revealed in their words. Monolingual teacher candidates felt included in the poem writing activity as they were able to share their experiences growing up. Through poetry, they could represent their identities by expressing emotions connected to their upbringing.

When they interacted with others who speak different languages and who grew up in different cultures, they were reminded of the diversity which exists in the classroom. Similarly, when students are in a supportive space that encourages them to share more about themselves, they feel seen. Activities which support translanguaging send a message to students that their languages and cultures are welcomed in the classroom.

Tip: Written poems and SWP can be representations of the students. By creating these identity texts, students have opportunities to see themselves reflected in the classroom.

Learner Engagement and Student Investment

By fostering safe spaces, students can confidently engage and take part in translanguaging activities. In Wales and Shakina's workshop, teacher candidates were not grouped together by their teachables so many of them chose to sit with people they already knew. While not planned, this grouping proved advantageous when we asked them to first share with a partner. Some did not feel comfortable sharing their poems with the whole class, but they were more willing to share their poems with someone they knew. The opportunity to share with someone also opened up conversations about how languages sound. Some commented that they appreciated listening to different languages.

It is important for students to feel comfortable when being creative in their work and trying a new activity. Translanguaging can be used as a language learning tool to support the creative process. Students are actively engaged in learning when they use their full language repertoire (Wong, 2019). One of the participants in Jennifer's workshop replied to the poem's prompt in Spanish. When she voluntarily read her poem aloud and realized the other participants in her cohort did not understand, the teacher candidate asked if she had done the exercise wrong. There was no right or wrong way to write a multilingual poem because the activity supports the use of home languages. Jennifer used this opportunity to ask the teacher candidates in the session what they would do in their classroom if one of their students wrote their poem in their home language. Students responded by providing examples of ways they could use this as a teaching opportunity in their class. Some of their ideas included having other students guess the meaning of the text or having the Spanish speaking student give a mini-Spanish lesson to the rest of the class. These are great examples of ways to increase the meta-linguistic awareness of their students.

For Jennifer, a notable challenge was trying to present to a cohort of first-year teachers whose teaching contexts are very different and who may not have thought of using poetry in their subject areas. Many of the workshop participants had never heard of SWP, yet in both workshops there was a spoken word performer among the teacher candidates. By asking these SWP performers to share some of their experiences, we were able to provide contextualized examples for other workshop participants about the power of SWP. One participant even spoke about the healing potential of poetry.

As educators we need to recognize the importance of inclusivity when working with a diverse student population. One teacher candidate talked about being able to express her frustrations of being the only woman who wore a hijab in her school. This same teacher candidate felt that she could identify with the woman in the video who wore a hijab so

the diverse representation in our materials thus drove home our message about the importance of welcoming students' diverse identities into classroom spaces.

Tip: Provide exemplars and content that represents diversity. Create a supportive and safe environment which welcomes the use of home languages.

Conclusion

Acknowledging the positive outcomes of promoting the use of home languages in the classroom, the Ontario Ministry of Education encourages all teachers to “tap the rich resource of knowledge and understandings that ELLs bring to school” by “continuing to promote the ongoing use and development of ELLs’ first [home] languages” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 8-9). By designing activities that build on learners’ home languages, such as the creative writing and speaking activities described in this chapter, teachers can draw on learners’ background knowledge and skills, scaffold their learning of new languages, affirm their linguistic and cultural identities, and enhance their motivation and engagement in learning. Integrating learners’ home languages into the classroom through these activities also helps teachers to build a strong bridge between learners’ home and school language practices, thereby making learning more authentic and meaningful for them.

The successful implementation of these activities in different educational contexts will require special consideration of the learning expectations and goals, strengths, and needs of learners, and the unique linguistic and cultural landscape of each context. Teachers who would like to integrate these activities as part of a unit based on K-12 curriculum expectations could start by identifying the overall and specific curriculum expectations related to their unit or topic. This can be followed up by creating language and content objectives for each lesson within the unit and adapting the writing and speaking activities suggested in this chapter to match the language skills and content to be taught in the unit. These multilingual activities could also be provided as modifications and accommodations for ELLs as part of their ESL programming. Depending on the proficiency level of learners, as determined by their Steps to English Proficiency, STEP level, or other classroom assessments, these writing and speaking activities can be modified in terms of their length, language focus, content, and success criteria.

For teachers in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, creative writing and speaking activities can be used as part of a year-long initiative to showcase the diverse languages and cultures represented in the classroom, school, and community. Another activity that can be done alongside or in preparation for the multilingual poetry or SWP activity is the Language Flowers activity, where learners think about all the languages they see, hear, speak, read, write, and have dabbled in. (See Appendix D.) The Language Flowers can be displayed around the classroom to show students that all their language practices are welcomed in the classroom, and to allow teachers and students to learn about each other’s experiences with languages.

When teachers are not multilingual themselves or do not share the same home languages as their learners, they can still implement multilingual speaking and writing activities successfully. The successful implementation of these activities does not

require the teacher to be multilingual. Rather, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, teachers should embrace and promote a stance that respects and values the diverse language practices of their learners; they should design units and lesson plans that incorporate learners' home languages and make necessary moment-by-moment shifts in response to the feedback and needs of their learners (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017). As part of a translanguaging design, teachers can plan collaborative groupings by home language so that students with a shared home language can work together through the planning, writing, reviewing, revising, and performing stages of these activities. Learners who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can also work together on these activities, for example, by creating and performing a collective 'We Are From' poem that showcases the diversity of the group members. Finally, we encourage all teachers to become co-participants in the learning process with their students by creating their own "I Am From" poems, spoken word poetry, or other identity texts so that their identities are not only shared with their students, but help foster meaningful connections between teachers and learners.

If you are an educator and you have conducted any poetry, spoken word, or other identity-focused activity that worked well for your context, we would love to hear from you! Please get in touch with us via email so that we can share resources with each other and engage in a conversation about the use of creative language activities for diverse educational contexts.

Notes

¹ www.scribjab.com

² <https://youtu.be/49am2RAKJTI>

³ <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/866715715552/>

⁴ These were anonymous responses

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Appendix A: I Am From Template

I AM FROM

I am from _____ (*place*),
from _____ (*describe place*) **and** _____ (*describe place*).
I am from _____ (*food*),
from _____ (*describe food*) **and** _____ (*describe food*).
I am from _____ (*something from nature*),
from _____ (*describe something from nature*).
I am from _____ (*animal*) **and** _____ (*describe animal*).
I am from _____ (*family activity*) **and** _____ (*family activity*),
from _____ (*family name*).
I am from _____ (*description of family home*),
and _____ (*description of family home*).
I am from _____ (*language*)
and _____ (*something you say in your language*).
I am from _____ (*something you like*).
I am from _____ (*place*).

Adapted from: <https://heatherplett.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Where-Im-from-template.pdf>

Appendix B: Poem Samples

I Am From by Jennifer Burton

Regina 에서 왔습니다 (*place*),

from the land of the living skies (*describe place*) **and** squawking geese (*describe place*).

I am from donuts and kimchi (김치) (*food*),

from sugar (*describe food*) **and** spice (*describe food*) **and** everything nice.

I am from vast fields of wheat (*something from nature*),

From snow that crunches under your feet (*describe something from nature*).

I am from frogs (*animal*) that swim in ponds (*describe animal*).

I am from family picnics and bonds (*family activity*),

from the Burton family (*family name*).

I am from a mom with the best hugs (*description of family home*),

and dad that plays with Lego (*description of family home*).

I am from English and 한국어 (*language*)

and 'I love yous and 사랑합니다' (*something you say in your language*).

I am from finding animals in the puffy white clouds (*something you like*).

I am from the big beautiful blue house on Bard Crescent (*place*).

I Am From by Wales Wong

I am from Hong Kong (*place*),

from humid weather (*describe place*) **and** loud sounds (*describe place*).

I am from pineapple buns, BBQ pork, and seafood (*food*),

from savoury (*describe food*) **and** sweet (*describe food*).

I am from the Peak (*something from nature*),

from high rises on top of high hills (*describe something from nature*).

I am from bunnies (*animal*) **and** furriness (*describe animal*).

I am from dim sum Sundays (*family activity*) **and** Chinese New Year's dinners (*family activity*),

from the 黃 family (*family name*).

I am from high rise buildings (*description of family home*),

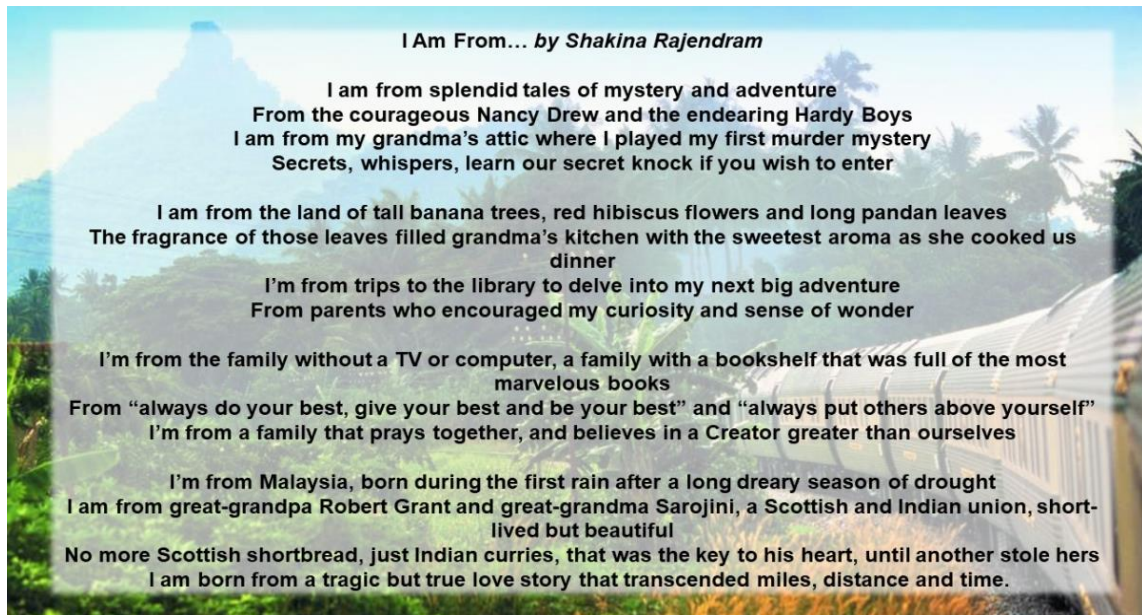
and air conditioning (*description of family home*).

I am from Cantonese (*language*)

and "Nay ho ma?" (*something you say in your language*).

I am from milk tea (*something you like*).

I am from Hong Kong (*place*).



Appendix C: Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan – Writing a Multilingual Poem			
Date:	Activity: Multilingual Poetry	Time: 90 minutes	
Grade: 6-7			
Learning Goals/ Objectives	1. Create a multilingual poem using a template 2. Use descriptive language/imagery in their poems	Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Handout ("I Am From" Poem template) <input type="checkbox"/> Stationery <input type="checkbox"/> Computer <input type="checkbox"/> Projector
Connections			
Cross-curricular connections - social studies, art, history, language			
Connections to students' lives (local/global) - culture and language			
Differentiated Instruction		Assessment	
Accommodations / Modifications:	Diagnostic:	Formative:	Summative:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase time ✓ Peer tutor/Partner ✓ Oral explanation ✓ Provide additional instruction ✓ Provide multilingual dictionaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Observation ✓ Anecdotal notes ✓ Questioning ✓ Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Observation ✓ Anecdotal notes ✓ Questioning ✓ Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Written assignment (completed poems)

Curriculum Expectations - The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Language

Strand	Overall Expectations
Oral Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes; 2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
Reading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning; 2. recognize a variety of text forms, text features, and stylistic elements and demonstrate understanding of how they help communicate meaning;
Writing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience; 2. draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience; 3. use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively; 4. reflect on and identify their strengths as writers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful at different stages in the writing process.

		Time (Min.)	Lesson Activities	Assessment
Minds-on	Warm-up	10 min	Materials – Laptop (Instructor), projector Activating Prior Knowledge (text → context) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recite a poem: “roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet, and so are you” - Ask students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o to identify text type (poem), elements that are in a poem, poems they know (either in English or in their home language) - Tell students they will be writing their own poem about themselves - Ask students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o to talk about where they were born, their family, the languages around them (hear, speak, see), the food they eat 	Diagnostic – Identify prior knowledge regarding poetry
Action	Activity 1	20 min	Materials – Laptop (Instructor), projector, whiteboard, dry erase marker, I Am From template Modelling the Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Display the I Am From Template - Read teacher’s <i>I Am From</i> Poem as an 	Diagnostic - Identify prior knowledge regarding language and linguistic features

			<p>example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Model how to complete the <i>I Am From</i> template by going through each line and completing the poem together as a class. While doing this, elicit student responses, clarify vocabulary, scaffold responses - Teach how to use appropriate parts of speech, word order, and descriptive language (specifically literary device - Imagery) 	
	Activity 2	30 min	<p>Materials – Handout (I Am From template)</p> <p>Writing the Poem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students to create their own poem - Encourage them to be creative: use imagery, multiple languages, descriptive words - Tell students to use different colours when they write in different languages (or highlight those words in different colours) 	Formative – Identify the language students are using when they fill in the template individually, and their understanding of the prompts
Action	Activity 3	20 min	<p>Materials – Students’ completed poems</p> <p>Present their Poem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students to share their poem with a partner (they could read it out, or sing it, or perform it with actions) - Elicit volunteers to share their poem with the class - Ask students to listen for use of other languages in students’ poetry performances, identify linguistic features that may be different than English 	Formative – Identify students’ understanding of the instructions, similarities and differences between languages and linguistic structures and features
Closure	SUM-MARY	10 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarize the key points from the lesson - Display students’ poems around the class 	Summative – Written assignment which will be in the form of a poem
	HOME WORK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students who have not completed their poems can take their poems home to work on - Students could get their parents/family members to help them with the different languages 	
Extension Activities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology: students could use ScribJab to create an electronic poem with images and multiple languages or record their poems on FlipGrid or YouTube - Linguistic features: use completed poems to teach different linguistic structures - Poetry share: students bring in poems from different languages and cultures to share with the class 				

Appendix D: Language Flowers

Use the different colored petals to create your own **Language Flower!**
ADD the symbols below or CREATE your own symbols for each petal

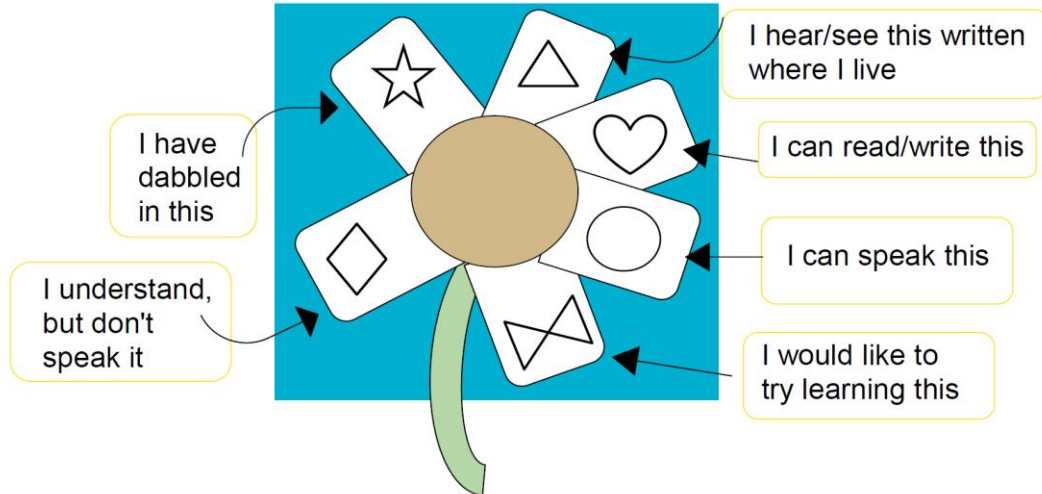


Figure 1:

Language flower instructions

Image created by Mimi Masson (2017) and adapted by Shakina Rajendram (2018)

Language Flowers

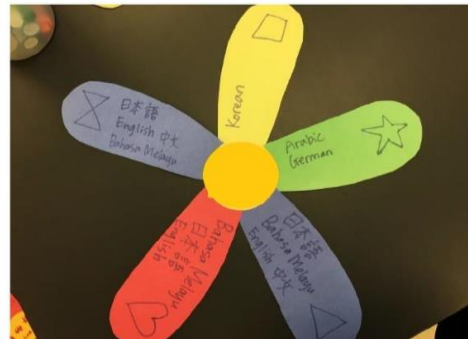
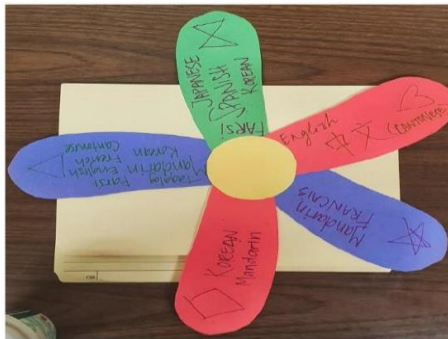


Figure 2:

Examples of language flowers

Images provided by Shakina Rajendram

Appendix E: Additional Resources for Workshop Participants

Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2011). *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators*. [PDF File]. CUNY-NYSIEB.

<http://www.nysieb.ws.gc.cuny.edu/files/2012/06/FINAL-Translanguaging-Guide-With-Cover-1.pdf>

(This guide contains a collection of translanguaging strategies that K-12 educators can implement in the classroom)

Cummins, J. & Early, M. (Eds.) (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Trentham Books.

(This book provides examples of identity text projects for multilingual learners in the classroom)

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. (2020). *Me mapping with language learners*. <https://sites.google.com/view/memapping>

(This website offers activities and lessons on using the Flipgrid app along with videos of multilingual English language learners sharing their linguistic repertoires, important milestones, experiences at school, and their hopes and aspirations for their future)

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *Many roots, many voices: Supporting English language learners in every classroom*. [PDF File]. Queen's Printer for Ontario.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/manyroots.pdf>

(This ministry document provides practical ways on how to support multilinguals in the classroom)

Simon Fraser University. (2013). *Scribjab* (Version 1.1.2) [Mobile application

software]. <http://itunes.apple.com/app/scribjab/id617063807?ign-mpt=uo%3D5>

Spoken word poetry lesson plan:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57542d1b0442628dccc>

[81967/t/589c995fb8a79b543614cd5a/1486657891579/Spoken+Word+Unit+Guid](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57542d1b0442628dccc/81967/t/589c995fb8a79b543614cd5a/1486657891579/Spoken+Word+Unit+Guide.pdf)

[e.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57542d1b0442628dccc/81967/t/589c995fb8a79b543614cd5a/1486657891579/Spoken+Word+Unit+Guide.pdf) (This resource provides a 10-week unit plan to teach students about how to

write, rehearse, and perform their spoken word poetry).

Spoken word poetry video: <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/866715715552/>

(This video 'Forever an immigrant' presents a spoken word performance by an Iranian-Canadian poet)

Technology Resources

(These free tools can be used to create digital stories, comics, poems, videos, etc.)

Adobe Spark: <https://spark.adobe.com/>

Flipgrid: <https://info.flipgrid.com/>

MyStoryBook: <https://www.mystorybook.com/>

Pixton: <https://www.pixton.com/>

Powtoon: <https://www.powtoon.com/home/?>

Scribjab: <http://www.scribjab.com/>

CHAPTER

2

Teachers as Status Experts: Lessons from Keith Johnstone's Improv and Status Teachings

Steffi Retzlaff

Experience Designer & Educational Specialist
www.steffiretzlaff.ca

Abstract

Theatre and improvisational skills are life skills. Actors communicate ideas clearly, collaborate and actively listen. They are present and react appropriately in the moment. Teachers need the same skill set to creatively and pedagogically respond to challenging and opportunistic interactions in the classroom. Over the years, they have had to become better communication and relationship experts to master their complex job. Teachers normally don't get taught how to successfully communicate and relate to kids and teenagers. Being aware of the many means of communication available to teachers and how to use these to make all students feel welcome and at ease in the classroom is an objective of this paper. Language is much more than words. It encompasses physical, gestural and status information. This paper is based on a workshop given to teacher candidates at the University of Ottawa and focuses on status and improv as a 'a means of language across the curriculum' establishing teachers' involvement and responsibility in the development of positive social relationships in the classroom. Keith Johnstone's work in theatrical improvisation and his understanding on status - he conceptualizes status as something you do, regardless of your social status - provide useful concepts for teachers and social interaction management skills.

Keywords: Keith Johnstone, improvisation, status, social interaction

Introduction

Being a teacher involves a continual process of identity development, negotiation and collaboration, including our perception of ourselves as teachers and how we portray ourselves to our students. We characterize ourselves and are characterized by our students by a set of personal attributes that exceed the simple functional attributes associated with the role of “teacher.” These attributes may characterize a teacher as a facilitator, communicator, relationship builder, man, woman, friend, foe, or as someone who is strong, relaxed, easily stressed, vulnerable, (dis)organized, etc. Any set of attributes combine to form a teacher’s identity. Of course, this identity continuously changes, evolves, and emerges as we engage with changing socio-cultural contexts and different institutional settings. The shaping and reshaping of a teacher’s identity is based on a constantly changing knowledge of self, our perception of the teaching profession and process, and our beliefs about our roles in this process (Martinez Agudo, 2014).

Teachers have had to become better communication and relationship experts to master their complex job. In teacher education programs, however, aspiring teachers learn mainly how to teach their subjects. But they are not only teaching math, history, languages or social science. Essentially, teachers are teaching people. And they normally don't get taught how to successfully communicate and relate to kids and teenagers. Being aware of the many means of communication available to teachers and how to use these to make all students feel welcome and at ease in the classroom is an objective of this paper. Language is much more than words. It encompasses physical, gestural and status information.

For the English acting coach and founder of modern improvisation theatre Keith Johnstone “status” has to do with the “self-esteem” of a character in a scene or an encounter. Status is something you have, but also something you do, something you pretend and play. For teachers, having a status toolkit in our repertoire of teaching skills not only benefits students, it can also benefit us by allowing us to develop a comprehensive range of elaborate status expressions to use in a variety of context-related situations (Coppens, 2002).

This article is based on a workshop given to teacher candidates at the University of Ottawa and focuses on status and improv as a ‘a means of language across the curriculum’ establishing teachers’ involvement and responsibility in the development of positive social relationships in the classroom. It also supports current thinking about the necessity of a performative component in teacher training and learning (Even & Schewe 2016; Even 2016; Anderson 2015).

The traditional high social status for teachers has progressively changed over the last couple of decades. In this workshop we explored ways we can consciously use verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal (para-verbal communication refers to the messages that we transmit through the tone, pitch, and pacing of our voices. It is how we say something, not what we say.) cues to proactively raise and lower our personal status to positively affect classroom interactions and add to our identity as teachers. In fact, consciously managing our level of status may be the secret to becoming a successful and relaxed teacher.

What is Status and Why is it Important in our Role as Teachers?

Our belief about our roles ultimately shapes teacher-student interactions. These interactions also establish, maintain, or change the level of status we have with our students on an on-going basis. According to Keith Johnstone (1987), status and status changes influence human motivation and behaviour. Status according to Johnstone is something you do independent of your actual social status. Social status is indicated by status symbols such as titles, positions, money and property. Status according to Johnstone, in contrast to social status, results from the behavior of the characters in a specific encounter and operates on the see-saw principle. If I brag about my new car, I raise my status and lower that of the people listening to me. If someone responds with, “Oh yeah, I’ve got two,” then they raise their own status and lower mine. Status mostly has to do with action and how we interact with other people and vice versa. Fenstermaker (n.d.) notes that status is defined as “your beliefs about your own value-to-the-pack, reflected in your behavior towards the rest of the pack” (para. 7).

As a matter of course, people continuously raise and lower their status in verbal, non-verbal, and para-verbal conversations. No human action is free of status cues. There is no such thing as a neutral status; humans are always responding to the status of others and calibrate their own elevated or deprecated status relative to those others. Johnstone (1987) first noticed the operation of status when he was teaching improvisation to actors. He routinely found that the scenes he asked his students to play seemed lifeless, unrealistic, and unconvincing. In contrast, when he asked them to play a role with a specific high or low social or intuitive status (see below for an explanation of social, natural and played status) he noticed that they not only preferred doing this but were much more convincing. As an acting teacher, he found he could elicit a better performance from his acting students if he asked them to get their status a little above or below their partner's. The actors seemed to understand instinctively what he meant, and their work was transformed:

Suddenly we understood that every inflection and movement implies a status, and that no action is due to chance, or really ‘motiveless’. It was hysterically funny, but at the same time very alarming. All of our secret maneuverings were exposed. If someone asked a question we didn’t bother to answer it, we concentrated on why it had been asked. No one could make an ‘innocuous’ remark without everyone instantly grasping what lay behind it. Normally we are ‘forbidden’ to see status transactions except when there’s a conflict. In reality status transactions continue all the time. (Johnstone, 1987, p. 33)

Status is dynamic; it varies according to the situation and individuals in play. The expression of status is mainly subtle and subconscious, therefore, learning about status begins with exercises that focus on developing an awareness and use of different status gestures, signals, and cues. An awareness of status behaviours has implications for the non-acting classroom as well. An understanding of status may help us promote better social interactions in any classroom. Our ability to detect and manage the status cues of

students may help to defuse potentially disruptive situations or take advantage of potential learning opportunities.

There are three types of status: social status, natural status and played status. In society, social status is often defined by our position or role relative to those in our group, for example:

Table 2
Examples of social status

High Status	Low Status
Lawyer	Client
Doctor	Patient
Principal	Teacher
Teacher	Student

Our natural status is the inner and outer attitude that we intuitively display as our preferred status. Some people are naturally high-status players and others, who prefer harmony and don't like to disrupt others, are naturally low status players. Of course, natural status is not innate. We are not born with high or low status. It rather is the result of our upbringing, social contacts and life experiences. Interestingly, we can learn to *play* high or low status contrary to our socially defined role or natural status.

The Workshop Experience

The workshop was organized into these parts: warm up, some theoretical background notes on improvisation and status, an analysis of VIP Status players and practical exercises to explore status transactions and the “status paradox”.

Throughout the workshop participants were invited to reflect on their knowledge and awareness of the ways in which they are shaped by their cultures, roles, and status, and how these perceptions are communicated verbally, non-verbally and para-verbally.

Activity 1: The Warmup

In standard improv fashion, we started the workshop with a classic theatre improv warm up, called Zip Zap Zop. This exercise focuses on developing direct and clear communication with words, gestures, and body language. It also emphasizes celebration of failure (celebrate failure and move on!), collaboration and focus. Celebration is a great way to encourage a culture of learning.

This activity is meant to be fast-paced, engaging, interactive, and fun. While being focused on one thing, you also need to have peripheral vision to see what's going on in the circle and be ready for anything. Just like in the classroom, you have to be ready for anything. And if things do not go as expected, the game focuses on how to celebrate the failure then quickly move on.

How to Play Zip Zap Zop

1. Gather the group in a circle.
2. Have the group repeat back the 3 words, Zip, Zap, Zop, in that order so that they get the hang of it.
3. Each word is like a ball that can be passed to someone else but needs to be passed in that specific order and using a regular rhythm.
4. To pass to someone else, you need to make clear eye contact and use a hand movement pointing to the person.
5. Keep a steady rhythm throughout the game but increase the speed to maximize the fun and the difficulty.
6. If someone slips up by saying the wrong word, breaking the rhythm, or responding when it's not their turn, everyone cheers to celebrate.

This warmup helped to break the ice, get physical, and set the tone for an interactive workshop.

Participant Reaction to the Exercise

In the workshop's debrief, participants commented that because there wasn't any player elimination only celebration when someone made a mistake, the game became more fun and they didn't feel stressed or anxious.

Activity 2: Making Meaningful Connections Fast

The second activity, called Friendly Freeze Dance, got participants moving. This exercise helps participants create a high volume of meaningful connections in a short period of time. It uses short sentence stem prompts and incorporates movement and music to keep the tone upbeat. This activity needs to move fast otherwise participants may linger in one group talking only about one prompt.

Friendly Freeze Dance is a versatile activity that you can use with many different angles and themes according to your group or the level of language proficiency; it also makes for a fun ice breaker at the start of the new school year to learn some interesting facts about each other.

Note: I themed the prompts to suit the workshop and to lead into my first PowerPoint slide.

How to Play Friendly Freeze Dance

1. The trainer starts the music.
2. Participants move/dance/walk with a groove around the room.
3. The trainer stops the music.
4. When the music stops, participants spontaneously create groups of three.
5. The trainer announces one sentence stem for each round. Examples of ones we used follow:
 - a. My favorite subject in school was....
 - b. My favorite teacher in school was/is...
 - c. In my family, my role is...

- d. If I have to introduce myself in a group, I usually...
 - e. If there is conflict in my world, I generally react...
 - f. In a team or during group work, I usually...
 - g. If a professor asks me to speak, I usually...
 - h. If someone insults me in the classroom, I...
 - i. My identity as a teacher is defined by....
6. Each participant completes the sentence individually and tells the other two members of their group.
 7. Steps 1-6 are repeated but with formed different groups each time.

This was another ice breaker activity and a preamble to the group discussion that followed. It helped to create a relaxed environment where the students made connections, shared their experiences and built rapport for a productive learning environment.

Participant Reaction to the Exercise

With a room of 35 participants, this activity worked beautifully in allowing many people to meet and learn some interesting facts about the person they just met in a short period of time. Everyone seemed to enjoy this activity. Keeping this activity moving fairly quickly was also great because participants responded without too much thinking and were sometimes surprised by their (perhaps, subconscious) answers. There was not much time for inner dialog and that might have been helpful.

Activity 3: Contextualizing Identities, Roles, and Status

In group discussions students explored concepts of identity, roles and culture in the classroom. I asked the participants to reflect on their knowledge and awareness of the ways in which they are shaped by their cultures, roles, and identities, and how these perceptions are communicated verbally, non-verbally and para-verbally. The aspiring teachers discussed the following questions in groups:

- Are teachers aware of how they are shaped by their own identities, culture(s) and perceived status? If so, how do they in turn shape classroom culture?
- How does the complex interplay of identity, culture, and role behavior affect classroom interactions?
- Could the knowledge and practice of status, that is, the ability to proactively raise and lower your status as appropriate, help to positively affect your classroom interactions and shape your teacher identity?

A critical inquiry of the answers to these questions may help to uncover underlying belief and knowledge systems, values and power relations which are often unclear to people. These questions may raise awareness that often our teaching and interaction styles are largely based on our culture, perceived status and/or learning styles. An awareness of such perspectives can help to improve our cultural competency and inclusiveness as educators.

Activity 4: Understanding Status and Developing Status Awareness Skills

In his book *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, Johnstone (1987) expressed disappointment with his education: “I’d left school with worse posture, and a worse voice, with worse movement and far less spontaneity than when I’d entered it. Could teaching have had a negative effect?” (Johnstone, 1987, pp. 16-17). *Impro* is about theatrical improvisation but it may also be considered a much broader approach to education, especially with respect to the ideas and application of status.

Next in the workshop, we talked about the idea that status operates on the see-saw principle; when someone goes up, someone else goes down. In theatre, a lot of comedy revolves around playing the opposite of the character’s social status, for example, when a beggar bosses around an aristocrat or a servant undermines the master. We improvised such a scene. One participant was asked to play a king and another to play the servant. First, the participants were not to speak any words as they interacted with each other in their roles; they were only to use body language, gestures, movement, and different spatial planes (middle, low, high). Later, we added voice. The audience was asked to take note of the high status (king) and low status (servant) signals.

The audience identified the following:

Table 1
High and low status cues

Cues	High Status	Low Status
Movement & Posture	focused, slow, confident, directed; wide gestures, keeps head still, upright, straight, “loose but tight”	unsure, nervous, jerky, stiff, tight, awkward, bent, moves a lot, fast, makes room for others, little “tics”
Voice & Speech	deep, relaxed, calm, normal pitch, but also yelling/whispering as appropriate to the situation	too quiet or too loud, mumbling, fast, uses a lot of “uhs” and “ems”, pitch typically high, squeaky, forced
Eye Contact	looks directly, with a duration appropriate to the social situation; but also dominant stare-down	rapidly averts eyes, avoids long eye contact, unsteady gaze, looks down; but also admiring, naive
Rooms & Objects	owns the room, looks out of the window, uses objects confidently, sits confidently on chair/desk	behaves like an intruder, shy movements, sits on edge of chair, hides behind desk

Not all of these cues/signals were identified by the audience in the first round of status improvisations. Table 1 represents the final chart developed over the course of the workshop and several activities. After the first round, we asked the servant to play outside his social status, that is, with high status. This made for a lot of laughter,

because he didn't adhere to the social status that one would expect from a servant, i.e. there was a contrast between the played and the social status.

This exercise gave the students a first idea how status changes in everyday situations (and on stage), because status is a dynamic process. Status is something you do. You can have a low social status, but you can play a high one and vice versa.

Participant Reaction to the Exercise

Status and how to use it as a tool in a teacher's toolbox was a new concept for most of the workshop participants. One participant, however, in the theatre program was already familiar with Keith Johnstone and his notion of status.

Activity 5: VIP Status Players

Before exploring status as related to classroom interactions, I presented participants with an analysis of famous high and low status players. I showed them pictures of some world leaders in representative poses. I also discussed movie characters who do a great job of switching seamlessly between low and high status such as Christoph Waltz as "Hans Landa" in *Inglorious Basterds* (Tarantino, 2009) and Charlie Chaplin as "Hynkel" in *The Great Dictator* (Chaplin, 1940).

We looked at pictures of Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama in more detail and discussed them.

In my opinion, Obama is a great status player. In Figure 1, he presents himself in a low status posture on the steps where he needs to look up to his aides. However, this is the US president, and as such, Obama arguably has the highest social status in the world. He has power. His presidential role alone guarantees him respect. Additionally, his high social status pairs well with a charismatic personality. Even if he wasn't the president he might be perceived as a person with high status. Perhaps that is why he can play at having a lower status in order to communicate a political message. His stance is democratic, and one interpretation of his posture might suggest something like: *I am listening to you. Everyone deserves the same respect, the same recognition. I don't stand above you. I am focused on communication and understanding.*



Figure 1

President Barack Obama Talks with Aides Outside the U.S. Ambassador's Residence in Paris.

Photo by White House (Pete Souza) in Wikimedia Commons, June 7, 2009, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_sitting_on_stairs_at_US_ambassador_%27s_residence_in_Paris.jpg, United States Government Work in the public domain.

In Figure 2, the Dalai Lama's posture, hand gesture, and eye position portray low status. His head and body are lower than the person he is greeting. He looks humble. His hands are slightly raised but lower than the hands of his counterpart. A typical servant-master gesture. He makes himself as small as possible to give the other person the most space. It is interesting to note that in almost all photos of the Dalai Lama he assumes low status. He plays low status knowing very well that he has immense influence on the world stage. His inner high status allows him to consciously display an outer low status thus raising the status of the people around him. His image seems to assert that if someone can give so much space, recognition, and attention to others, he obviously has enough of it himself.



Figure 2

The 14th Dalai Lama and Catholic Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast

Photo by Christopher Michel in Wikimedia Commons, October 14, 2012, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tenzin_Gyatso_-14th_Dalai_Lama_\(14580879125\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tenzin_Gyatso_-14th_Dalai_Lama_(14580879125).jpg), CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>)

Status transactions are symbolically and situationally meaningful. Expressions of status take the form of ritualized, and in many cases, institutionalized gestures. These expressions most frequently come in embodied forms, such as posture, eye contact, nervous gestures, ticks, speech patterns, or movement.

This activity helped participants understand that the first step in becoming a classroom status expert is to observe status and status transactions in our everyday lives. When we are aware of situations in which we typically take positions of high status and when we assume low status, we can consciously change our status positions, but it takes a lot of practice and we need to know which of our actions and gestures signal the change. Unconsciously, we play on the status see-saw all the time and our status position triggers a status reaction in others. However, status behaviour needs to become conscious if we want to use it to achieve personal goals, or to affect behavioural changes in our students.

Activity 6: Exploring Status through Movement

Everything a teacher does leaves an impression on students. Those impressions are created by the way you walk, talk, what you say and how, what you are laughing at, when you get angry and even what you wear. We explored this idea by walking in low and high-status demeanor and by exploring the nuances between the two.

High/Low Status Walking

Before starting this exercise, I asked participants to imagine that status can be rated on a scale between 1 and 10 where 10 represents the highest status, for example, that of a god of gods, and 1 represents the lowest status, like that of the lowliest creature you can imagine. With this in mind,

1. I asked participants to walk through the room as someone with a status of 1. Having theoretically explored low and high status cues and behavior in the previous activities and discussions, they start walking looking down, making no eye contact or at most, very shy quick glances, by putting their body weight forward, making space for others, and touching their faces. Some moved fairly quickly in a nervous manner, switching directions often, not sure where they were going or what the goal was.
2. Then, I asked them to walk in a manner that represented a slow movement up the status scale. I started to see participants raise their eyes and look up.
3. Next, I asked to get an idea of where they want to go in the room and go there confidently. I asked them to shift their body weight back towards their heels.
4. I asked them to notice what this shift in body language does to the way you look at other people in the room; what does it do to your posture and spine?

The objective was once more to explore concepts of status and to experience how physicality contributes to status. Status in a non-verbal and physical way may convey messages and attributes, such as confidence, even better than words.

Participant Reaction to the Exercise

One participant said that when he shifted his weight back into his heels and looked up and out it gave him a bit of a swagger and he relaxed a lot.

Activity 7: Exploring Status through Freeze Frames

We used freeze frames/tableaus to capture high status and low status postures. Freeze frames are like photographic snapshots that fix or freeze moments, scenes, or storylines in a person's body. States of being (i.e., emotional, physical, etc.), attitudes, and relationships are still long enough for one to notice and interpret what is being exposed in these snapshots (Scheller 1989).

There are various options for how to work with freeze frames. We used the following scenarios to capture high status and low status postures:

1. One group walked as a 10, the other as a 1 and a third group were the observers.
2. At several points I said "Freeze" and the two walking groups froze immediately and stayed in that position for about 1 minute.
3. I asked the observing group to interpret the freeze frames, e.g. how they perceived the players' high or low posture, gaze, attitude, etc. and how they would feel when being confronted with either low status or high status body language.
4. Then I asked the participants in the freeze frames how they felt, what they thought in that moment and what their next step was.

5. At the end of this activity, I randomly called out a 10, 5, 7, 4 etc. and asked the participants to demonstrate these numbers on the status scale in their walk as well as in a freeze frame.

This helped to raise awareness that we can practice different statuses and intentionally shift status based on the situational context. Three of the awareness-raising questions they then discussed with a partner were:

- How does the shift affect your speed, rhythm, eye contact, posture?
- What does it do to you physically?
- Which number on the status scale feels most ‘natural’ to you?

Participant Reaction to the Exercise

Not surprisingly, the high-status players commented that they felt strong, confident, and ready to take on their next step carrying their heads high. One high status player had her hands on her waist and said she felt very grounded and powerful (think Superwoman!).

The social psychologist Amy Cuddy (2012) notes in her TEDTalk, *Your body language may shape who you are*, that the body language we assume can affect how we see ourselves. She also says that “power posing,” that is, standing in a posture of confidence even when we don’t feel confident, can elevate feelings of confidence and power, and might have an impact on our chances for success.

Activity 8: Exploring Status Transactions through Improvisations

We always negotiate status and we know instinctively if we are in the higher or lower level status position. Status is both conscious and subconscious. We have an idea in our head of our own relative value, and act either high or low status accordingly.

The following exercise helped participants to understand that status recognition takes place in the transactions between people.

1. I asked five volunteers to pick a card numbered 1 to 5. The number 1 represents the lowest status and 5 the highest.
2. I asked them not to reveal the number on their card to the others.
3. I then asked them to improvise a scene. The only instruction was: You are at school in a classroom. Improvise a scene and play your character according to your number.
4. The audience was instructed to determine the players pecking order.
5. The volunteer players played off each other’s cues and signals, both verbal and non-verbal.
6. At the end of the scene, the players revealed the role they had developed: principal, teacher, assistant teacher, janitor and student.

We all have different status in different situations and roles. This activity clearly showed how we adjust and raise or lower our status in encounters with others. The high-status characters in the scene (principal and teacher) didn’t try hard. They were very self-conscious and confident, walked slowly and spoke with pauses. They also owned

the room. The low status characters instantly knew they were lower on the totem pole and played it out accordingly.

Activity 9: Exploring the “Status Paradox” through Improvisations

We will have students in our classes who challenge our status and who, contrary to their socially defined lower status, try to lower the status of the teacher for some reason or another.

If teachers and students get caught up in a status conflict and neither of them will lower their status, constructive communication and relationship building won't happen. However, according to Keith Johnstone (1987), successful communication and problem solving can evolve through continuous status transactions between both partners.

So, what happens if students don't play along with the assumed social high status of the teacher? We as teachers can independently lower our status. We don't have to play high teacher status all the time. To demonstrate how to manage situations like this, I conducted the Status Paradox exercise, adapted from Plath (2010).

The Status Paradox

1. Two volunteers improvised a scene between a teacher and a student according to my instructions.
2. The student character interrupted the class and misbehaved, and the teacher character admonished the student multiple times.
3. The teacher was getting even angrier and insisted on her high status; she got louder and threatened to call the principal.
4. The student did not back down. She even stood up and insulted the teacher.
5. The improvisation transpired, and the participant audience witnessed a communication breakdown.
6. I asked the audience to analyze the status transactions and determine whether or not it could result in any deeper student behavioral change. In this scenario, if the teacher ‘wins’ only because of her high social status, the student would not respect the teacher on a personal level or see her as a role model. This status transaction would not result in any deeper behavioral change.
7. Next, I assumed the role of the teacher and the student character was asked to play the same role.
8. I transitioned to a low status behaviour of not responding to the insults; this communicated to the student that yelling and insults won't affect me.
9. I kept eye contact with the student and slowly and calmly walked towards the student; this communicates a high-status gesture of confidence.
10. When I got close to the student, I leaned in and said quietly: “My dear, what’s going on with you today? How can I help?”

Plath (2010) cautions us that a daring status switch like this can go wrong. However, if the teacher knows the students well and genuinely likes them, the risk is not as great. By moving into low status, the teacher actually achieves high status again and restores authority. Plath (2010) calls this “the status paradox”: the total reversal of status

behaviour by the teacher will, over time, lead to subconscious behavioural changes on the part of the students (p. 15).

Participant Reaction to the Exercise

The participant who played the angry student commented that indeed something changed when I approached her and was interested in how she felt. It took the wind out of her sail and she felt a lump in her throat.

Activity 10: Principal and Mr. Smith

While we didn't have enough time to experiment with the following scene adapted from Johnstone (1987, p. 49-50), we talked about the different possibilities of how to play it. Reading the following short scene we tried to develop specific ideas about how a status transaction could play out first between a principal in high status and Mr. Smith in low status, then next between a principal in low status and Mr. Smith in high status.

The Script

PRINCIPAL: Come in. Ah, sit down Mr. Smith. I suppose you know why I sent for you?

SMITH: No, not really, Sir.

(PRINCIPAL pushes a newspaper across the desk.)

SMITH: I was hoping you wouldn't see that.

PRINCIPAL: You know we can't employ a teacher with a criminal record.

SMITH: Won't you reconsider?

PRINCIPAL: Good-bye, Mr. Smith.

SMITH: I never wanted your bloody job anyway.

(SMITH exits)

There are two versions of the scene with instructions in Appendix A and Appendix B. Participants were encouraged to experiment with them on their own time, to find some new versions, and notice how effectively one can use the room, objects in a room, body language, voice, gaze, etc. Note: It's important not to change the words in the scripts because the focus needs to be on body language signals and voice cues.

Developing Status Strategies

As teachers, we can practice becoming effective status players. The foundation for a constructive low status behaviour is an internalized high status. That means, we must feel confident and ready to engage before taking a ride on the status see-saw. While an internal high status comes more naturally to some, learning to manage status is not a question of talent or an innate capability but a matter of practice. To practice and gain confidence, we can try little high status experiments every day.

Here are some high status behaviours you can practice when interacting with people:

- Exhibit relaxed and friendly facial expressions; use a natural smile
- Exhibit calm and purposeful movements
- Exhibit straight, symmetric and open posture; don't cross your arms
- Breathe deeply
- Keep your head relatively still and your eyes focused; don't avoid eye contact
- If you feel attacked, look at your partner calmly and then turn away intentionally
- Speak with a volume that works for the room; not too loud and not too quiet
- Avoid too many repetitions
- Avoid "uhs and "ems"
- Use the room with confidence; don't hide behind the desk, rather, use a central position
- Address others by their names
- Pause and learn to sustain the moments of stillness with a relaxed body and mind

You could also expand your status repertoire by observing and analyzing everyday situations, movies, theater plays, interviews, or political debates. Charlie Chaplin movies are a great resource, as are Sacha Baron Cohen's movies that feature the fictional character, *Borat*, the detective series *Columbo*, *Mr. Bean*, or Christoph Waltz' performance in *Inglorious Basterds*.

The following questions might help with your repertoire development:

- In what context does the status game take place?
- What status does my counterpart display? How does (s)he behave verbally, non-verbally, para-verbally?
- What inner status do I have in the moment?
- What outer status do I display in the moment? How do I behave verbally, non-verbally, para-verbally?
- Are inner and outer statuses congruent?
- What is my objective in this situation?
- How can I manage the situation through my change in status to achieve my objective?

Conclusion

In addition to Improv being a popular genre of performing theater, it is also a suitable tool for the study of social interaction (Johnstone, 1987, 1999; Spolin, 1999). I believe it can enhance listening skills and situation-focused sensitivity. Improvisation training and drama pedagogy for student teachers could lead to a heightened perception of the subtle verbal and non-verbal cues in classroom interactions and lead to better collective collaboration. Improvisation "cultivates a specific skill set of tolerating mistakes, listening skills, spontaneity, presence, performance confidence and collaboration skills, which might contribute to the social interaction competence of the student teachers" (Seppänen et al. 2019, p. 2784).

An internalized high status/inner high attitude may help teachers at times to surrender their socially defined high teacher status in favour of low status gestures to positively affect their relationships with students. To assume low status is nothing less than a show of our human side that reveals something about ourselves. It means that we take a risk and become vulnerable, but it also offers us an opportunity to become more successful educators. It asks us to reflect on our own fears, weaknesses, and strengths.

Status also plays a significant role in shaping teacher identity. Anderson (2015) notes that,

[T]he shared drama experience has value as an opportunity for student teachers and teacher educators to jointly experience, reflect upon, and interrogate concerns which fall within the sphere of curriculum. In the shared embodied experience, they together experience and reflect on learning and teaching, and begin to develop and shape a teacher identity. (p. 15)

Drama, improvisation, and performative pedagogy, generally, hold promise for shaping a developing teacher identity. A performative approach to education is needed “to break up traditional classroom dynamics, transcend the given roles, and let in different worlds” (Even, 2018, p.101).

The participants in the workshop found the idea of status and improvisation quite revealing. They mentioned they liked the collaborative nature of the improv games and that seemingly small contributions matter greatly to the whole. When discussing the status exercises and especially the idea of lowering teacher status, and thus taking a risk, one participant expressed some discomfort and doubt. However, like improv theatre, where failure is ever present, new and seasoned educators alike are allotted the space to learn how to accept little failures on the pathway to larger successes.

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Appendix A: Script

(Principal sits relaxed in his chair. A knock on the door)

PRINCIPAL: Come in.

(Smith opens the door a crack and looks anxiously inside. Then he enters and stays at the door not sure what to do.)

PRINCIPAL: Sit down Mr. Smith.

(Smith takes a laborious attempt to sit down at the edge of the chair. Lowered head, he doesn't dare to look at his boss.)

PRINCIPAL: I suppose you know why I sent for you?

SMITH: No, not really Sir.

(PRINCIPAL pushes a newspaper across the desk.)

SMITH: I was hoping you wouldn't see that.

(Smith is kneading his hands and snuffles)

PRINCIPAL: You know we can't employ a teacher with a criminal record.

(Smith touches his face and says quickly and almost in inaudibly:)

SMITH: Won't you reconsider?

PRINCIPAL: Good-bye, Mr. Smith.

(Smith is desperate and starts to cry)

SMITH: I never wanted your bloody job anyway.

(SMITH crying; he exits)

Option: Smith plays his last line in high-status.

Adapted from Johnstone, 1987, pp. 49-50

Appendix B: Status Changes: The See-Saw Principle Script

(Smith confidently enters the room without knocking, walks around “owns the room”, looks out of the window, then walks relaxed to the chair and sits down.)

PRINCIPAL *(confused)*: Come in. Ah, sit down Mr. Smith.

(Principal tries to get his high status back: he looks directly at Smith and says firmly:)

PRINCIPAL: I suppose you know why I sent for you?

SMITH: No, not really Sir.

(PRINCIPAL pushes a newspaper across the desk.)

(Smith looks at it without a care, shrugs his shoulders and takes a pen from the principal's desk and plays with it. Then he looks provocatively at his boss and says slowly and bored:)

SMITH: I was hoping you wouldn't see that. *(winks at his boss as if they were best friends)*

(Principal tries to ignore Smith's behaviour and insists on the company rule:)

PRINCIPAL: You know we can't employ a teacher with a criminal record.

(Smith realizing that he has to switch into low status, puts the pen away, moves to the edge of the chair kneads his fingers, looks pleadingly at the principal and asks in a begging tone:)

SMITH: Won't you reconsider?

(Now this status change makes it hard for the principal to stay tough, he doesn't wanna come across as a bad boss. He feels embarrassed, lowers his head and says in an almost consoling/apologetic tone:)

PRINCIPAL: Good-bye, Mr. Smith.

(Now Smith switches again. He stands up slowly, close to the table, very upright posture, looks at the principal amused and says clearly and quietly:)

SMITH: I never wanted your bloody job anyway.

(SMITH exits slowly and quietly closes the door behind him)

CHAPTER

3

What's Art Got to Do with It? The Power of Drawing to Commit New Language and Concepts to Memory

Mimi Masson

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Abstract

Based on a workshop given at the University of Ottawa to pre-service teachers, this chapter explores the potential benefits of welcoming art and other forms of artistic expression in classrooms to foster student learning. While the process of learning can be overwhelming for students who are English-language learners (ELLs), it can often be that way for other students too. When it is, a student may feel like the teacher is dispensing information by the barrel-full while he or she can only catch it by the spoon-full. To avoid situations like this, perhaps brought on by teachers' reliance on routines that promote passive learning and rote-memorization, art can be used to foster student-led meaning-making and to create highly individualized learning experiences for students in any classroom. The chapter begins by looking at examples of how art makes unique contributions to our ways of thinking. Then, building on the research findings of Wammes et al., (2016), it explores how art helps students commit words and ideas to memory. It identifies techniques for incorporating art into vocabulary learning, and discusses an exercise conducted during the workshop to allow pre-service teachers to experience the meaning-making potential of art in promoting student learning. The chapter then concludes with some self-reflection questions for teachers and highlights the benefits of using art to promote divergent thinking, multiple intelligences, and student-centered learning.

Keywords: vocabulary, English Language Learners, art-based practices, drawing

The Power of Drawing to Commit New Language and Concepts to Memory

What is the place of art in the K-12 general education classroom? Many teachers make use of visuals to explain concepts to their students. And certainly, this can be a great way of presenting key information to support verbal and written explanations the teacher provides. However, art does not have to be a passive tool for students. Art can also activate student insights that might otherwise have been difficult for them to grasp, or even notice with only oral or written explanations. To illustrate my point, take a moment to draw a 4-person family, with two adults and two children.

Activity: Draw a 4-person family (2 adults, 2 children).

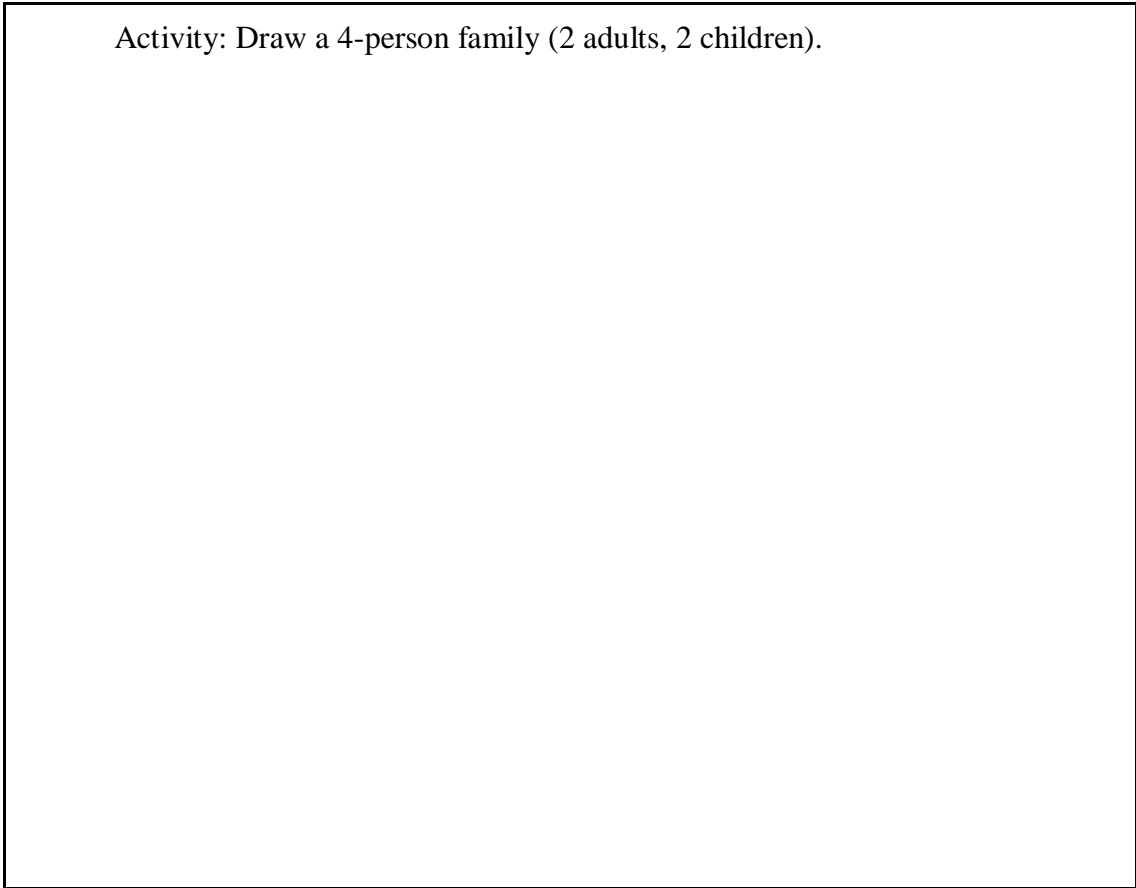


Figure 1

Activity Worksheet: 4-Person Family Drawings

How did you place the members of the family on the page? Drawing a family can reveal social and cultural nuances about the family unit that may be difficult to pinpoint or identify outright when we are asked about it. Consider the following drawings of a 4-person family unit:



Drawing 1



Drawing 2



Drawing 3

Figure 2
Sample 4-Person Family Drawings

Drawing 1: Image by marcos101 on Pixabay <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/family-drawing-children-paint-home-429166/>, Pixabay Standard Image License (<https://pixabay.com/service/license/>)

Drawing 2: Image by Sergey Nivens on Shutterstock <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/draw-your-family-370819169>, Shutterstock Standard Image License (<https://www.shutterstock.com/license>)

Drawing 3: Image by Helen Field on Shutterstock <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/family-drawing-173069681>, Shutterstock Standard Image License (<https://www.shutterstock.com/license>)

What differences do you notice between the drawings? The arrangement of family members is perhaps one of the biggest differences. Consider for a moment that in most cases, a teacher asking her students to draw a picture of their family would not specify the order in which the family members should appear. And yet, each picture arranges

family members in a specific order. The child artists, in these cases, order family members in a way that is inherently meaningful for them based on their lived experiences. Looking only at this aspect of each picture, provides details about the artist's world, and world view that they might not have thought to mention if asked to write a paragraph about their family.

In Drawing 1, the children are placed at the centre of the family unit, with the parents as bookends. In Drawing 2, the parents are at the centre of the family unit with the children at both ends. Perhaps the child who drew this picture sees the children in the family as appendages that have grown out of the union of these two parents. In Drawing 3, the parents and children are organized in a linear fashion, perhaps by age or by status in the family. What is also interesting about these drawings is that in all three the movement is from left to right, and that in all three, the adult male is on the left, while the adult female is on the right. To be sure, these consistencies reflect ways of perceiving and organizing the world that are socially and culturally reinforced. They reveal key details about how a society has internalized concepts about the world that members use to present and make sense of information. Comparing and discussing the different drawings can provide a rich jumping off point for teachers to explore students' beliefs, assumptions, and stereotypes about the family unit. This simple example demonstrates how art can provide teachers with alternate ways to understand their students and engage with them. It also demonstrates how the production of art, not just its reception in the form of visuals and diagrams, can develop a different type of learning and awareness in students. With this in mind, teachers may want to encourage students more often than they do, to generate their own visuals as a way of organizing their thoughts, becoming aware of their underlying assumptions about a topic, and as a way of creating a schema for understanding the personal patterns they use for learning.

Learning Vocabulary

As a teacher, you may need to introduce your students to new vocabulary before you can delve into more complex discussions on a unit topic. This can apply to students who already speak English, of course, but here I focus on what this means for students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs are students who have either newly arrived in Canada from a non-English speaking country, or those who don't speak English with their parents at home, also known as allophones. As such, ELLs may have to learn some key vocabulary that your English-speaking students don't.

What's key to remember when working with vocabulary is that there are different types of knowledge associated with a given word: *receptive knowledge* and *productive knowledge*.

Receptive knowledge means that one understands a specific word when one hears it or sees it. For students, this means they understand what a word means and that they are able to assign the correct meaning to the word. However, this is often not as simple a task for ELLs as it may first appear. Many English words have multiple meanings.

Consider the verb “run” and how its meaning changes in each of the following sentences:

- “I **ran** to the bus stop.”
- “He **ran** for the presidency.”
- “The class **runs** from September to December.”

Often, meaning is determined contextually from the rest of the information provided in the sentence and more broadly, from the topic of conversation. Helping your ELL students learn how to process context to determine the correct meaning of a word will help them progress more easily in your course.

Productive knowledge means that one is able to produce or use a specific word orally or in written form. For students to produce a word, they must have the necessary information to either pronounce or spell the word. However, that is not enough. As mentioned previously, words rarely function as individual units; they are used in conjunction with other words, sometimes as phrases or collocations. Collocations are groups of words that operate as chunks. Consider the word “meeting”. A person is likely to “go to,” “attend,” or “participate in” a meeting. In contrast, one would not likely “visit,” “frequent,” or “engage in” a meeting even though, in other contexts, these words are accepted synonyms for previous ones listed. Not only do ELLs have to learn the appropriate verbs and nouns to use together, they must also learn all the small connector words (prepositions) we use in English, such as, *in*, *of*, *with*, *for*, and *to*, then learn which ones go with which nouns and verbs. This is not to say that the teacher must explain why these words go together, but she must introduce them as a package, or chunk, when teaching them.

In terms of introducing basic and commonly used in-class vocabulary, teachers can in their science class, for example, point out that students will “make observations of” the results of the experiment, or in a creative writing class that they expect students to “jot down ideas about” their essay, and that students can “ask questions” if they have any. Teaching vocabulary to students as chunks can help them progress holistically and with a firmer grasp of how the English language is used.

Techniques Using Art to Help Students Learn

Another way to help ELLs, as well as your English-speaking students, is to create a vocabulary book. You can let students choose what vocabulary to include in their vocabulary book, or provide them with a list of essential words for the unit under study. Vocabulary books help students practice and develop their receptive and productive knowledge of new vocabulary, and help them keep track of how to chunk the new language they encounter. Figure 3 is an example of four vocabulary book entries from a Japanese student learning English.

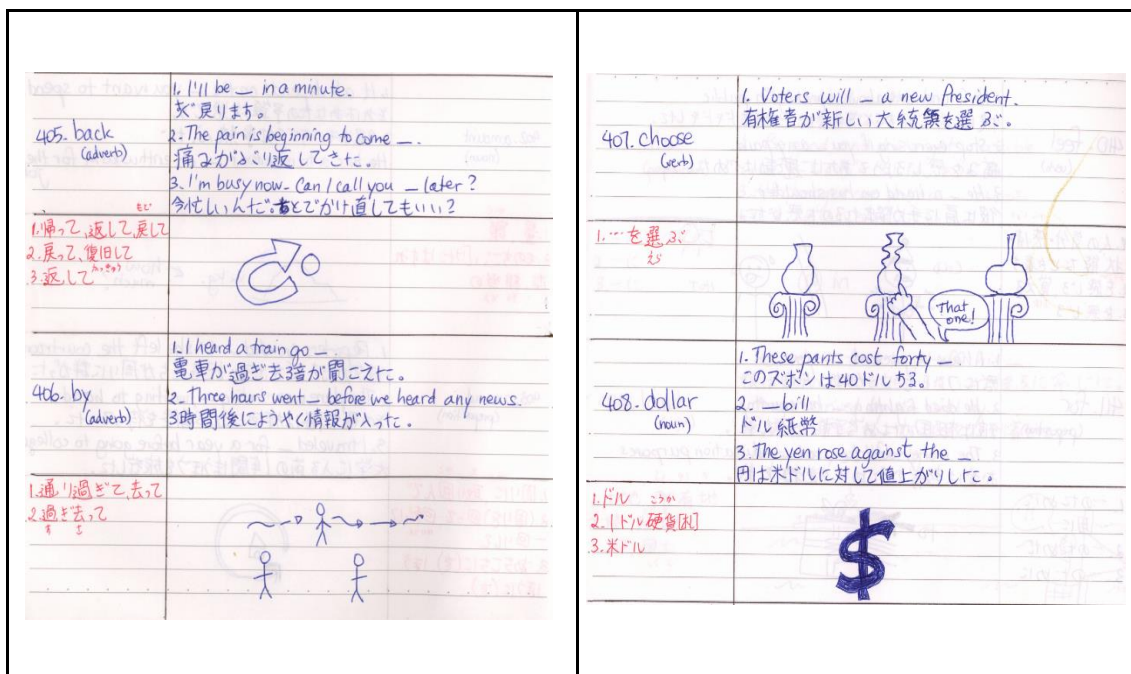


Figure 3
Vocabulary book entries
Images by Mimi Masson

Each word has four sections that the student completes. The top-left box contains the spelling of the word and its word type, be it verb, noun, adjective, etc. to differentiate it from other words with the same spelling, as in, “record” as a verb (i.e., I recorded the presentation) and “record” as a noun (i.e., Sophie bought a new record). The bottom-left box contains the top three definitions of the word. In this case, we used a dictionary that provided the definitions according to the most common spoken and/or written usage. The top-right box contains a sample sentence taken from the dictionary for each of the definitions in the bottom-left box, with the key word blanked out. Students do this so that they can quiz themselves when they review the sentences; they can hide the definitions or the sentences. The bottom-right box is a space for students to use mnemonic devices to recall the key word. Students are encouraged to create a hint for themselves that helps them recall the word. The hint can be a synonym, antonym, phrase, or a picture. The hint is unique to each student as each has their own mental and emotional associations with the word being studied. Drawings are also used as prompts to help students recall the word. Of course, each drawing has personal meaning for the student; the more personal and individualized, the better!

What Does the Research Tell Us?

There’s a reason drawing helps with vocabulary recall! Wammes et al. (2016) ran seven different experiments to determine whether people remembered vocabulary lists better when they wrote the words down or drew a concept representing the words. In each experiment, they had one group draw and one group write. They tweaked the

parameters for each of the experiments, for example, in Experiment 1A, participants wrote the same word repeatedly, and in experiment 1B, participants writing the words spent time embellishing them. In every experiment, the people who drew the words retained them better! The quality of the drawing didn't matter and there are reasons for that.

One reason is that art and drawing help us get in touch with our emotions. According to arts-based education research (Barone, 2008), using art in an educational context can add a sensory component to learning that allows us to step outside of our traditional ways of thinking and learning. Artistic endeavours teach us to not rely solely on logic and reason. Drawing also helps us contextualize the concept we are learning in a much deeper web of understanding, a web that already exists in students' minds! For example, if I ask you to draw a car, you have your own lived experiences with cars that influences the image of a "car" in your mind's eye. Perhaps, if your family car when you were little was red, you will choose to colour the image of a "car" in red in your vocabulary word book to anchor the newly learned word in your memory. The act of drawing itself also involves a demanding and complex interaction of cognitive, emotional, and motor skills. Wammes et al. (2016) describe this set of interactions as elaboration, visual imagery, motor action, and pictorial representation. They explain that first one must "generate some physical characteristics" (p. 1755) of an item—elaboration. Then, one must "create a visual" (p. 1755) image of the item— visual imagery. Next, one must "engage in the actual hand movements" (p. 1755) required of drawing—motor action. Then, one is left with the "picture as a memory cue" (p. 1755) for later retrieval— pictorial representation.

For learners, it is working through these various cognitive and emotional processes in conjunction with a motor-action that cements an idea generated through art in their minds. In this workshop, I wanted to show pre-service teachers that while meaningful interactions applied to vocabulary building is one way to use art in the classroom, it can be applied to more complex ideas too, such as, phrases, word chunks, concepts, and (scientific) processes as well.

Workshop Activity

After being introduced to the information outlined above, the pre-service teachers in this workshop were invited to work in small groups, with other teachers who are preparing to teach the same subject area. Their collective group task was to think of a concept or activity they may need to cover with their students then to develop a mini-lesson to teach it. For example, some English Language Arts teachers worked on asking students to summarize a novel they read for class; some Physics teachers worked on an activity to retain the characteristics of different elements of the periodic table; some Physical Education teachers developed a lesson to introduce different body parts and their functions; and some Social Studies teachers created a lesson in which they would discuss a historical event critically with students, such as, the arrival of the first European explorers on Turtle Island; and some French language teachers devised a

lesson that would help students retain the masculine and feminine form assigned to nouns. The teachers were advised that their activity could take place over several lessons within a unit and that using drawing could be part of those lessons at different points in the unit. They were also told that drawing could be used in any number of ways; it could be used to represent what the teacher explained, to recall information, or to explain something to another student. In any case, teachers were instructed to keep in mind the curriculum for students of a specific grade level and make the target content they were developing appropriate to that age group.

After the small groups had created their mini-lessons, they participated in a jigsaw activity to test the effectiveness of drawing as a learning tool. Members of one group each paired off with members of another group they had not worked with. The pairs were instructed to give the mini-lesson they had designed to their new partner. This meant that a Social Studies teacher might be paired with a Music teacher, for example, and would receive a mini-lesson that was not in their area of expertise. Key to the activity was that the teacher giving the mini-lesson, although they had prepared the content carefully, did not impose a specific type of drawing on the learner; the learner had to generate their own understanding of the concepts the teacher presented. This was necessary for the benefits of drawing to take effect. The learner had to work through the four steps outlined by Wammes et al. (2016) to generate physical characteristics, create a visual image in their mind, engage in the act of drawing, and complete a picture for use as a visual cue to recall the information encoded in the drawing. This was the most difficult part for teachers in the workshop who, in some cases, came to their mini-lesson with a preconceived idea of how the learner should represent the ideas under study, thus robbing them of the important encoding process which needed to take place. The workshop participants in the teacher role were encouraged to:

- Explain their concept to their learner and have them draw it as they like.
- Talk slowly!
- Repeat often!
- Let their learner ask questions, give them guidance, but not necessarily tell them what to draw.
- Encourage their learner to seek clarification.
- Avoid imposing expectations about the drawing.
- Emphasize there is no correct or wrong way to draw a concept (as long as the information is not encoded incorrectly).

The aim of the activity for the teacher was to create a **personal highly individualized experience** for their learner. Teachers were also encouraged not to show their own drawings to their learners, as the final drawing created by the learner only needed to make sense to the artist. During this step of the activity, the teacher giving the mini-lesson could identify areas that the learner was struggling with as they encoded the information into a drawing. This provided the teachers with an opportunity to repeat, clarify and give additional details to their learners.

Participants who took on the role of the learner were asked to explain the concept they had just drawn back to the teacher who gave the mini-lesson. This became an opportunity for the teacher to notice where the learner had succeeded in acquiring and internalizing new information, and where they required more help to clarify some ideas. Where learners revealed gaps in their understanding, the teacher was able to negotiate and scaffold their learning into a more complex and nuanced understanding of the concepts under study. Asking the learner to explain orally or in writing, the act of *linguaging* (Swain, 2010), is a powerful tool for teachers to immediately assess what students have grasped about what they are learning.

The pairs were then asked to reflect on the following questions:

- As a teacher, what did you notice about what your student retained, or did not retain about your concept?
- Is this something you could explain better?
- Is this something that is more complex than you initially thought, and the student needs more time with?
- What did you notice about the exercise?

Finally, teachers were asked to return to their home group with the drawing that their partner had completed of the concept they had taught and compare them with the other drawings their group members brought back. Teachers could then reflect on any similarities or differences that emerged from the drawings their learners had created, potentially illustrating the various ways in which learners encode information. They were also asked to report back to their group about the experience they had teaching the concept to their learner, about how the learner negotiated meaning when there were gaps in his/her understanding, or about their learner's unique insight into the concept.

Conclusion

Like the examples of how art can help with targeted/isolated vocabulary words, art can also be used as a tool to work with ELLs when introducing new concepts. The benefit of this type of pedagogical approach is that it can offer new avenues for both ELL and non-ELL students to engage with course content. These benefits can include using art in the classroom as a tool for creating meaningful and potentially more memorable interaction with the material. Art is also a way of inviting all learners, regardless of their English language skill into a classroom activity. Despite those who claim, "They cannot draw," putting pen to paper is a mechanical skill that most can achieve, whether it is done well or not. The point of using art in the classroom is not to create beautiful or visually pleasing representations, the point is for the artist to draw something that makes sense to him or her. Using art in the classroom is also a way to draw on multiple intelligences during the lesson, which helps students develop visio-spatial awareness, verbo-linguistic expression, logico-mathematical skills, and inter- and intra-personal connections. Building on that, a classroom which embraces art as a tool for learning sends a message to students that multimodal forms of expression and multiliteracies are

normal in this environment. It opens students' horizons to lateral and divergent ways of thinking. As with the family drawings, using art in the classroom makes space for the unpredictable, and the things that might be difficult to put into words. It can help reveal alternate world views in an illuminating fashion.

In closing, I would like to leave you, reader, with three reflective questions:

- What do you take-away from this activity?
- How do you envision applying this knowledge in your classes, and to help with teaching what?
- What are some limitations, or challenges of this arts integration approach?

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4

Integrating First Languages in the Classroom: Helping to Facilitate Student Success

Diana Burchell, Redab Al Janaideh,
Krystina Raymond, Jermeen Baddour,
Xi Chen,

University of Toronto / OISE

Abstract

This chapter, based on a workshop, outlines the importance and benefits of using a student's first language to support their academic development in all areas. This chapter reviews language immersion programs, as well as the social context around refugee and immigrant students in Canada. We then discuss the typical timeline for second-language development and the strategies that can be useful to assess these students on their own respective timelines. A case study is then discussed in detail, and participant feedback from the workshop is highlighted. Finally, we present the lessons learned during our conversations in the workshop and then discuss their implications for teachers, educators, parents, and other stakeholders. Overall, we emphasize that every teacher has a role to play in language development, regardless of their teaching specialization. We then provide practical tips throughout the chapter to help teachers make small, meaningful changes in the classroom.

Key words: second-language learning, language teaching, academic language proficiency

Integrating First Languages in the Classroom

Canada is known as one of the most multicultural countries in the world. This is especially true in large cities such as Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver. The authors, like many Canadians, value this diversity and regard it as a benefit for Canada as a whole. However, multiculturalism also presents challenges for teachers in how best to support multilingual students in the education system. This chapter presents strategies for non-language specialist teachers and language teachers alike in order to improve language development in all subjects. In the past, most teachers working with multilingual students used a complete immersion model (Stille look & Cummins, 2013). In this model, students were only allowed to use the target language, be it English or French, in the classroom. This model has at least two limitations. The first, and in the view of the authors, the most important one, is that it fails to recognize the first language (L1) as an invaluable learning/teaching resource for the second language (L2). Recent research now suggests that students' proficiency in their L1 actively supports the way they learn their L2 (Cárdenas-Hagan et al., 2007; Carstens, 2016; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). A research-informed classroom practice could therefore incorporate all L1 languages and the L2 language to support global language development.

The second limitation of using the strict immersion model is that it increases the chances of subtractive bilingualism and therefore is less accessible. Subtractive bilingualism means that, for students whose first language is not the majority language and are learning additional languages, they may lose their first language over time (Landry & Allard, 1992). In contrast, first-language English speakers in French immersion programs are prime candidates for additive bilingualism since their first language is the majority language and therefore are not at risk of losing it (Swain & Lapkin, 1991). However, as French immersion programs diversify (Sinay et al., 2018), we see more students who speak a non-majority language at home, English (majority and official language) in the community, and French (official and non-majority language) in school. Children enrolled in French immersion are therefore learning two official languages at once. This may place non-official language speakers at a disadvantage in terms of accessibility. Parents who do not speak an official language at home and value the home language may fear their children will lose their first language in the process of learning the other two.

Immigrant families face language transmission challenges when moving to a new host country. In many immigrant families, it is crucial that their children preserve their first language, and parents believe it is important to maintain control of the use of their children's first language both inside and outside of the home (Jia & Aaronson, 2003; Park, 2013). For example, it should be parents who determine when and how often to encourage and practice their first language with their children while helping them assimilate into a new culture. Therefore, most immigrant families continue using their first language in their homes as it preserves their cultural heritage, enriches their social groups and strengthens the communication between generations (Scheele et al., 2010;

Schwartz, 2010). Moreover, exposure to the first language outside the home with other families, neighbors, and friends who speak the first language helps create a sense of unity and belonging within the community (Haque, 2012). However, research has shown that this might be challenging for young children more than the older children who came to the host country already proficient in the first language (Jia & Aaronson, 2003).

From an L2 language learning perspective, exposure to communities with the same first language is advantageous because well-established first language skills can be transferable to the second language. This is clearly defined in Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis (1979), which tells us that a student's success or failure in learning a second language is heavily influenced by how well they speak their first language. Explicitly, this means that students' competency in their first language has a direct impact on their second language learning (Abu Rabia, 2001). As will be discussed later on, this explains why interrupted schooling in refugee children has an impact on their language learning in Canada. While L1 competency is a key factor in immigrant and refugee L2 language and literacy development, it is only one of many factors that plays a role. Other factors include the age of arrival to the host country, parental education, and the socio-economic status of both parents (Azhar et al., 2014). Another factor that plays an important role in determining how well and how quickly newcomer students learn an L2 is linked to the reasons for the family's arrival in the host country—voluntary immigration or for refuge. Immigrant children usually have higher opportunities to learn a L2 language because of the parents' high level of education and their continuous encouragement for a better life opportunity. To clarify, Canada has a points-based immigration system “that rewards applicants with higher levels of education, job experience, and language skills” (Smick, 2006, para. 4). All these factors make the transition into a new country and learning a new language relatively manageable. Conversely, refugees' profiles vary. Some might have fled countries in conflict and/or come from circumstances where families were subject to poor socioeconomic factors and lower educational levels.

Syrian Refugees in Canada

Due to the civil war in Syria, Canada has resettled more than 57,000 Syrian refugees since 2015 (CBC NEWS, 2019). With more than half of all Syrian refugees under the age of 25, refugee children and youth continue to be disadvantaged even after their arrival in Canada (Houle, 2019). When working with refugees, teachers need to be mindful of two factors that may interfere with their students' learning successes: mental health issues and interrupted schooling. The mental health of newcomers fleeing war-torn countries often has a serious impact on language learning for refugee students. Most of the refugees have experienced traumatic events due to war. Not only have they experienced the loss of their homes, many have endured harsh conditions including poor access to food and water, the loss or separation from family, physical and sexual assault, or been witnessed to torture and/or killings. Experiencing these stressful events has

significant implications for refugee students’ health and mental well-being. Educators need to prioritize students’ wellness and provide them with culturally sensitive support and resources to enable them to heal, resettle and establish a new sense of home.

Interrupted schooling also creates challenges for language development, particularly with older refugee children and youth who may have only received some education before moving to a host country. Unlike younger children who all face the novel experience of going to school, being away from the daily routine of school involvement and the pressure of limited time to develop a new language and academic skills required by the education system poses unique challenges to older children and youth (Al Janaideh et al., in press; Jowett, 2020). Both traumatic experiences and interrupted schooling may hinder their overall learning, but especially their acquisition of an additional language. Educators need to socialize their students to the behaviors expected of them in a school setting such as how classes are run, how to study, and how to participate in school activities, not to mention teaching the school rules. While learning all these school-based social skills will help students adjust, teachers should not underestimate the overwhelming effort required of students in doing this. Educators must stay empathic and monitor students’ well-being and ability to cope on an on-going basis.

Language Acquisition Timeline

We situate our chapter in an L2 framework conceptualized by Cummins (1979; 2003) which highlights the importance of being competent in both cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) for overall academic success. Table 1 below provides a more thorough understanding of the BICS and CALP framework.

Table 1

BICS and CALP Framework based on Cummins (1979; 2003)

	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
Acronym	BICS	CALP
Practical Definition	BICS is the ability for students to express their thoughts and ideas in a normal conversation (i.e. with friends and family).	CALP is the ability to read difficult texts (i.e. a biology text) proficiently.

Academic Definition	BICS is more commonly referred to as conversational proficiency. In other words, the framework suggests that having conversations in person allows students to use contextual clues to support their comprehension. Contextual clues include tone of voice, gestures, being able to ask questions, and receiving feedback in the moment (Sulzby, 1985).	CALP relies solely upon comprehension of academic material without the use of contextual clues (Curenton & Justice, 2004). For students this means they are unable to master the content of academic texts until they have mastered the language skills needed to process the content. These skills include learning a highly specific vocabulary, decoding at the word and sentence level, the ability to detect and correct their own comprehension problems and the ability to use resources when faced with challenging texts.
<i>How long does it take for fluency to develop?</i>	1-3 years of immersion	Approximately 5-7 years of immersion
<i>What helps develop these skills?</i>	Frequent opportunities for informal conversations, exposure to media (i.e. tv shows, music) in the target language, a safe environment to practice without being graded.	Frequent vocabulary teaching, reading interventions as needed, inquiry-based learning approaches, working on intrinsic motivation.

What do BICS and CALP Look Like in the Canadian Context?

When students are completely immersed in the target L2, in Canada English or French, it is expected to take them approximately one to three years to develop conversational fluency to the level of their peers (Cummins, 2008). Once BICS is developed, it becomes easier for students to work on CALP. CALP is particularly important because it is firmly linked to students' later academic success (Miller et al., 2006; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). In a completely immersive setting, such as Canadian schools, it takes English Language Learners (ELLs) approximately five to seven years before they become as academically proficient as their monolingual peers (Cummins, 2008).

Strategies for ELLs

Many studies have found that teaching ELLs strategies to read words is necessary to prepare them to gain access to meaning from printed symbols (Ehri, 2004; Ziegler & Goswami, 2006). Additionally, some ELLs are faced with the challenge of discriminating between two languages with a shared script (Jared et al., 2013). When trying to read in two languages that have the same alphabet, such as English and French,

children encounter an additional task of discriminating in comparison to ELLs who read in two languages with different scripts like English and Arabic. The strategies outlined below can be adapted to the child's first and second language when reading. There are two types of strategies that are relevant for ELLs to utilize when learning to read: a phonological strategy and an orthographic strategy. Both of these strategies are issued from Ehri's theoretical framework of the alphabetic principle (Ehri & Soffer, 1999).

By showing children that words are made up of individual sounds, phonemes, they can begin to draw their attention to small sound segments in words. To effectively use a phonological strategy to decode words students must be able to :

- link the sounds to the letters in the word
- identify individual sounds in the word that make up what they hear
- make an analogy by comparing the sounds in the word to a known word

Once children know a few letters and their corresponding sounds, they can start to blend those letters into simple words. In the case of making a phonological analogy, a child may pronounce the word 'cat' and notice it rhymes with 'bat' and 'hat'. The use of phonological analogy strategies plays a significant role in reading words, especially with words where the spelling is irregular because children also develop awareness of inconsistencies in the language such as with 'enough' and 'though' (Wimmer & Goswami, 1994).

The more words children read and the more they remember letter sound correspondences, the more they will be able to recognize letter patterns and word parts. To effectively use an orthographic strategy to decode words students must be able to:

- identify letters or patterns of specific letters in a word
- memorize high-frequency words
- make an analogy by comparing a combination of letters to a known word

As children demonstrate the ability to identify how letters are often combined to form unique patterns, they can start to notice them appear in multiple words. At this point, children will start to memorize simple words that they see often, known as high-frequency words, such as ball, cat, fast, etc. They will begin to organize these letter combinations and be better equipped to point out high-frequency endings in words like '-ing' and '-ight'. The use of orthographic analogy strategies enables children to recognize the letter combination 'ight' from 'bright', 'light', 'night' and 'sight'. Providing students with opportunities to practice these strategies in the classroom independently or in small groups can help them improve their reading skills by building a repertoire of phonological and orthographic strategies to decode new words.

Table 2
Example of Strategies

Strategies	Examples
Phonological Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sound it out: /c/ /a/ /t/2. Identify syllables: teach-er has 2 syllables3. Identify a rhyme: 'boat' rhymes with 'coat'4. Identify phonemes: /b/ /i/ /g/
Orthographic Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. "I remember how to spell 'read' and then you add the -ing"2. "I know to add a 't' in 'sitting' because I have to double the consonant to make the short i sound"3. "Right', it's light with an r on it. With an r instead of an l."4. "I've remembered a pattern that the teacher said: 'i before e except after c'. So, I remember that's how you spell 'ceiling'."

Case Study

To draw a connection between classroom instruction and the strategies, this section describes a case study designed to show the development of an ELL. On Wednesday afternoons, Mathieu, a second-grade student in an English-language school, received explicit strategies instruction in a small group. Mathieu comes from a home where English is not the language spoken by his parents and his parents prefer that he speaks to them in French only. Mathieu, who arrived from the Democratic Republic of the Congo a year previously, qualified for extra language and literacy help seeing as his parents were refugees. Despite his poor decoding skills and fluency, he is a motivated reader. Over a period of four months, Mathieu received intensive forty-five minute sessions of phonological and orthographic knowledge instruction. Mathieu struggled with reading in the language of instruction but not in his first language which was French.

Despite his poor decoding skills and fluency in English, he was persistent and practiced the strategies autonomously. Mathieu recognized certain letters and sight words but relied heavily on the context and illustrations to read. He had not mastered letter sound correspondences. It was important to teach him a phonological strategy such as how to identify individual sounds in words that make up what he hears. To ensure that Mathieu continued to practice, he was provided with images that showed the letter, a sentence, and the main items that began with that letter sound, such as the one presented in Figure 1 (Foorman et al., 2016).

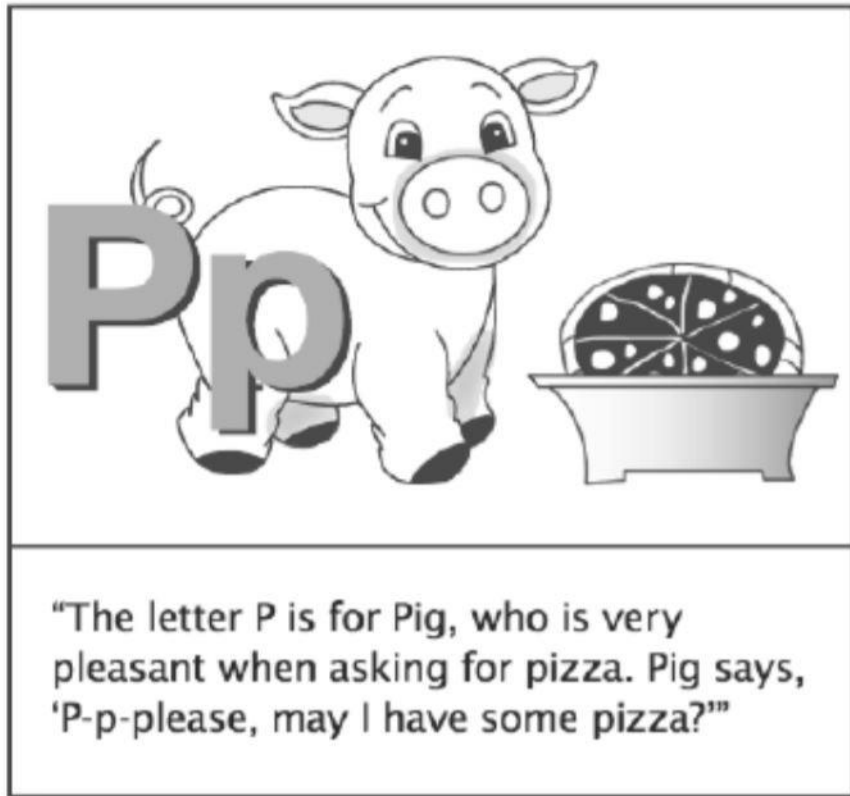


Figure 1
Example of a Task that uses Phonological Strategies

Image from Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade Practice Guide Summary by The Institute of Education Sciences
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/wwc_found_reading_summary_051517.pdf

Once Mathieu mastered letter sound correspondences, he was introduced to phonological analogy strategies. By integrating a word list, he began to make the link between letters and sounds and was able to orally produce new words by analogy. For instance, he would be shown a card with the word ‘moose’ and he would say ‘goose’. As he became more proficient in English, the next step of instruction was to describe the various orthographic strategies and their utility. Mathieu commenced with highlighting recurring letter patterns in short texts. He then would copy these words on a separate piece of paper and try to make analogies with them. For example with the word ‘bay’, he would write ‘day’, ‘hay’, ‘lay’, ‘may’, ‘pay’, ‘say’ and ‘way’. Lastly, Mathieu focused on retrieval, memorization and rules to help him read and comprehend texts. These strategies, listed in Table 3, could be practiced independently. By the end of the year, Mathieu’s reading performance improved significantly and he continued to use a variety of strategies.

Table 3
Orthographic Rules in English

Orthographic Rules
1. Every word has at least one vowel.
2. Every syllable has one vowel.
3. C can say /k/ or /s/. C says /s/ before an e, i, or y (cent, city, cycle). It says /k/ before everything else (cat, clip).
4. G can say /g/ or /j/. G may say /j/ before an e, i, or y (gem, giant, gym). It says /g/ before everything else (garden, glad).
5. Q is always followed by a u (queen).
6. Double the consonants f, l, and s at the end of a one-syllable word that has just one vowel (stiff, spell, pass).
7. To spell the sound of /k/ at the end of a word, we use ck or k. Use ck after a short vowel (sick). After everything else, use a k (milk).

Participant Workshop Reflections

One of the most valuable parts of this experience was the direct feedback we received from the participants of our workshop. Here are the lessons they learned in their words.

What happened in the workshops, in your words?

1. There were some practical strategies for helping students who are new to English or who are not yet fluent. The use of games and visuals and a caring approach were all highlighted in the workshops. The importance of bringing culture and/or language into the classroom.
2. I enjoyed seeing how semantics, phonology, and morphology base activities can be used in any classroom to enhance language learning production skills, especially in classes with many ELLs (which is the case in my Practicum). Essentially, the workshop [piqued] my interest in children's language learning abilities and why they are important. I liked that the presenters allowed for us to have time to try out some specific activities during the workshop which we could use with our students, to ensure that we understood how to use/apply them in the classroom.
3. Some takeaways from the workshop I attended today were various activity ideas to encourage and promote bilingualism and multilingualism in the classroom, such as the word analogy activity (pseudowords which resemble actual words in English). I also now realize the importance of ensuring that students do not lose their first language and that if they are ELL, they should have opportunities outside of the classroom to practice their English language learning.

What were the key takeaways that will impact how you teach moving forward?

1. Languages can help build student autonomy and confidence.
2. It is key to accommodate your students in any way possible and make them feel seen and heard.
3. That language learning is important in all subjects. That first language learning improves second language learning.
4. That it is not ok to tell children to leave their language and culture at the classroom door. Also, it is important to make connections between the new language and first language in the classroom.
5. I learned that I need to anchor the students' learning in language structure and vocabulary before even starting to teach a unit.

Author Reflections

This workshop made it abundantly clear that teachers want success for their students in all areas of life. As reading researchers, we were not sure what the reception would be when talking to non-language specialist teachers about the importance of building literacy in all classes. We were pleasantly surprised to see that all teachers, regardless of their background and qualifications, were meaningfully engaged throughout the session. Below are the highlights of some of the things we learned along with our participants.

In this workshop, we had many teachers who specialized in other subjects like Art, Math, Music or Science. While they could see that language skills impacted students in their classroom, there are several barriers for non-language teachers in addressing language problems. First and foremost, teachers already have a large amount of material to fit into a short amount of time with the students. Even when teachers find the time, non-language teachers rarely receive training on how to improve language skills in their classroom. Finally, since students have a dedicated language class, non-language teachers often feel that students are already receiving language instruction from a specialist. However, further conversation revealed a gap not being addressed. While students are receiving general language instruction in other classes, there is no place where they are taught domain-specific vocabulary. Here, as researchers, we immediately thought of cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP). Students are not taught how to deal with words that often come from Greek and Latin which they might encounter in Science and Math classes. Furthermore, given the national concerns about math scores at the moment, we thought this might be a viable gap to address moving forward.

Here are some of the ways in which we believe non-language specialist teachers could help their students with vocabulary and manage their time:

- It is helpful to break down words to understand the parts of it at the beginning of the unit. This sets students up for success throughout the entire unit. For example, teach them that *bio* comes from the Latin for “life” and *ology* from the Greek “logia” meaning “the study of.” Putting them together, *biology* literally

means “the study of life” by combining Greek and Latin, respectively. This is a simple example that can teach students to look for patterns and make word families of academic vocabulary.

- Students can visually draw out how all the new terms are related by making words maps. Students could do this as part of their revision for tests or projects. For example, list tri/angle (three angles, Latin) beside quadri/lateral (four sides, Latin) beside penta/gon (five angles, Latin from Greek), etc.
- Incorporate inquiry-based learning to have students investigate academic vocabulary. For example, why does the word octopus have three plural forms (octopuses, English; octopi, Latin; octopodes, Greek)?
- It is practical to conduct small, integrated language lessons as questions come up naturally. An example we used in our workshop was Social Studies. If students are struggling with the word “heritage,” you can point out that it comes from the Old French “heriter” and draw parallels to other words that come from that root such as “inherit.”
- Encourage multilingual students to translate terms into their first language. They can then play “language detective” and see if they can observe comparative linguistic patterns. For example, between English and French, they could notice that *cube* and *point* are the same, that *pentagon* and *pyramid* add an “e” on the end in French, and that *circle* and *cone* change the middle vowel.

Final Thoughts

Overall, this chapter shows that the first language of multilingual students is not only vitally important for them, but also a useful tool for teachers. Welcoming the L1 in the classroom improves students’ mental health, communication, community integration and L2 learning. It is therefore important to ensure that students build a strong foundation in their L1 both in school and at home. Once this strong foundation is built in the L1, there are strategies that help transfer knowledge into the L2. For example, you can ask students to be detectives and look for patterns across the two languages. They can furthermore break down these patterns and look for discrepancies that might present issues in the future. They can furthermore reflect on their own learning, in conjunction with their instructor and peers, to see how well they notice patterns moving forward.

Educators may use several methods to help immigrant and refugee children develop the English language. One of the best ways to enhance their language proficiency is to help them engage in hands-on classroom games and activities. Getting students to be active and personally involved in what they are learning has been proven more effective at helping students grasp what they are taught (Facella et al., 2005). An example of a simple and quick game that helps implement the knowledge learned in the classroom could be the STAND UP, SIT DOWN game. Teachers begin the game by having all the students stand up. The teacher then reads statements, and students sit down if the line applies to them. Examples of statements could be, “I play soccer”, “I am wearing the colour green”, or “I can tell you the meaning of (choose a word)”. The teacher adjusts the statements based on the students’ language proficiency level and the themes or

subjects that have been taught in the classroom. The teacher may adapt the game to other settings such as the gym and have the students run from one side or corner to another. Educators could also add a participatory component by calling on some of the students who sit to elaborate on the statement before going on to the next statement. When there is only one person left standing, they are declared the winner.

Another game that is a personal favorite of the authors is the BINGO CARDS game as it develops and enhances the use of language and communication skills. For the young or new English language learners, make bingo cards with illustrations and call out words. For intermediate students who have acquired some reading skills, make the bingo cards with words and draw out cards with pictures. For advanced learners, educators can use bingo as a fun activity to teach definitions, synonyms or antonyms and complex themes such as bullying. See Figure 2 on the next page for a sample activity created on Bingo Baker (<https://bingobaker.com/>).

Tips

Finally, here is a categorized list of tips for working with different language learners that you can print and keep handy in the classroom.

Multilingual Learners

- **Variety:** Use a variety of strategies to target and ameliorate specific skills that multilingual students need to learn.
- **Student as Investigator:** Give the students agency for their own learning by allowing them to take the lead. Doing this both empowers them and leads to more impactful learning.
- **Physical props:** Use lots of physical teaching aids to facilitate better language learning.
- **Metacognition:** This is an excellent opportunity to use assessment as learning in the classroom so that students can reflect on their own journey and make adjustments as necessary.

Refugee Learners

- **Well-being:** Prioritize refugee students' social and emotional well-being by providing culturally-sensitive support and resources. In turn, success in the classroom will be easier to achieve.
- **Learning by doing:** Use continuous engagement of hands-on learning activities and games in the classroom. They are a fun way to increase energy levels, and to practically use and implement the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. They are also beneficial for classroom interactions and peer relationships.
- **Visuals:** Using visuals is a useful way of teaching new vocabulary. Using real objects is especially useful when introducing adjectives (e.g. soft, rough) that may take some time if you use pictures instead.
- **Stories:** Reading stories together is important for developing children's listening comprehension and language production skills. Through shared reading,

educators may model reading skills, such as, expression. They may teach sentence structures and show students meanings of novel words to help students develop a vocabulary bank.

- Buddies: Implement a “buddy system” to help refugee students feel welcome and to foster an inclusive school community.

School Supplies BINGO!



Figure 2
Sample Bingo Card

Protractor: Image by Rachel C. on Pixabay <https://pixabay.com/vectors/school-school-supplies-education-1555908/>, Pixabay Standard Image License <https://pixabay.com/service/license/>

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CHAPTER

5

Seize the Pen! Encouraging Writing Practice Across the Curriculum

Heba Elsherief

University of Ottawa

Abstract

This workshop explores the ambiguously defined but often internalized idea of “writer’s block” and its ramifications for students across the curriculum and English language learners (ELLs) in particular. While scientists might agree that writer’s block does not have a physical source, the cognitive and psychological roots of it are not conclusively understood either. This workshop begins by exploring how teachers conceptualize writing tasks across subject spaces and genres. I delve into assumptions around it and posit that our own experiences mitigate how we present assignments to students. We may be apprehensive about writing because of grammar rules or rigid notions about forms of writing; alternatively, we may falsely believe that good writing can only happen when inspiration strikes. Even unwittingly, we may be unconsciously presenting these attitudes in our classrooms. Using the mythos around the metaphor of right/left brain strengths, this workshop theorizes and practices a methodology around a writing/editing ethos. The goal thereof is to restructure our own beliefs around writing –with the understanding that there is a place for “inspiration” as well as one for the more formal teaching of its tenets.

Keywords: writing instruction, editing, creative thinking, brainstorming, essay structure

Seize the Pen!

Encouraging Writing Practice Across the Curriculum

No matter what the course content, subject, or grade level is, teachers everywhere have witnessed the angst some of their students have when it comes to formal writing tasks. It might manifest as a collective groan when a high school English essay or a History research paper is assigned. It might take the form of pushback on assessments with demands for an oral presentation in lieu of a written one, or a multiple-choice quiz instead of a test requiring long answers. Teachers would probably agree that it is not only the English language learners (ELLs) who feel an aversion towards writing tasks but also the class in general. While some subjects, such as Music and Art, do not rely heavily on writing-based assessments, these classes cannot forgo writing assignments entirely.

An aversion to writing tasks may come from a variety of sources and any number of individual preconceptions. Regardless, these aversions must be navigated in a classroom setting so that students can move forward in completing their writing tasks. The question is how do we do this in a way that benefits students and helps to overcome their negative attitudes towards writing and writing-based tasks?

In this workshop, I first had teacher candidates discuss their own aversions to writing tasks and what complaints they may have heard from their students or other teachers regarding it. From this conversation, we established that there are times when students do not even realize they are engaging in writing—the sort of “no rules” creative exercises that come from an explorative standpoint rather than ones based on more standard assignments. Students who frequently have trouble *just starting* a piece of writing may be relying on long held but unproductive rituals for composing, such as waiting for inspiration before beginning to write. Others may feel anxious about starting because of a rigid set of instructions which emphasize writing as compliance with strict rules in entrenched conventions and formalities.

I posited, in the workshop, that right brain and/or left brain ideas about writing may be mythologized and often misunderstood differently by those who rely on their right brain than by those who rely on their left brain. Right brain students are generally those who are more artistic. Left brain students are generally those who are more logical or mathematical. I suggested to workshop attendees that a right brain-left brain metaphor is useful for teaching writing. Aside from recognizing that some students have aptitudes that foster one set of skills over another, I used this right-left brain model to address the two parts of the writing process itself.

In my model the “writing brain,” associated with right brain utility, can be used to allow students freedom of expression, while the “editing brain,” associated with left brain utility, can be used to ensure that the finished writing meets formal standards. The teacher’s role is to make space for the “writing brain” and to teach towards the “editing brain.” By understanding that each mode—the creative and the formal—both play vital roles in producing a piece of writing, we can help students with their negative emotions around writing.

What Writing Anxiety (Writer’s Block) Mean to Student Teachers

This is the question I first posed in the workshop. Oftentimes, teacher candidates think I am asking about how they think their students might answer but when I make clear that it is their experiences I seek, they struggle just a bit. Because they are teacher candidates and we are, in many ways, training them to be teacher researchers as well, they need to be familiar with both sides of the writer’s block paradigm. As students, they are required to write reports and final papers for their courses. As teachers in training, they are called to create lessons and activities that typically ask their students to demonstrate their content knowledge in ways that often involve writing. What the teacher candidates might not realize is that the struggles they experience when it comes to writing are very similar to what their students experience as well. Defining how writing anxiety “happens” or what it might look like is the first step but understanding that our feelings are similar to our students’ is just as important in the process of learning to move past a writing block.

A writer’s block often stems from negative emotions about writing. While emotional responses vary among students, it is often the case that they emerge from one of two central causes. The first cause is the belief that writing is an “inspired” activity—one that requires a sort of eureka moment to begin. Without feeling like their writing is going to be good, they are not convinced to try it. The second cause is a belief that writing has to follow certain rules and guidelines and conform to a style that they might not yet know as confidently as they think they ought to. This results in procrastination until they have done more research and feel more confident. Like our students, if we know that we have to write a final paper but we are not sure what standards are required, we might be afraid of not meeting the expectations required of us. Perhaps a teacher has stressed the need for grammatical acumen, or previously announced an aversion to passive voice, or any other number of “rules” that are meant to guide writing tasks. If students feel these are not their strong points, they will see these as challenges, and this might also lead to feelings of anxiety or writer’s block.

At times students delay writing because they cannot choose what to write about it. This might happen when teachers don’t provide a writing prompt or specific parameters, or when they give students a broad scope of topics to choose from. At other times, students may be tasked with writing in a genre or mode they are unfamiliar with, for example, a lab report when their experience has only been with writing research papers, formal academic essays, or informal responses.

Workshop participants recognized firsthand that not feeling grounded enough in a subject might send them on a pursuit for more knowledge before writing about the topic. Sustained research then prevents them from allotting the time to complete the writing task. Additionally, workshop participants were clear in pointing out that when they or their students do not make some progress with writing activities, they are frustrated with the quality of their own work. When they read back their work and hate it, they say “I don’t write because I can’t write!” This complaint is often heard from their students and it is one that we can empathize with because even the best writers sometimes feel the same way.

Writing the Bones of the ‘Horrible’ First Draft

I often tell people that although I have a couple of degrees in English literature, it was not until a doctoral level course in narrative writing that I was first formally tasked with practicing creative writing. Although I had been doing it on my own, I had always seen it as a hobby rather than an endeavor for which one might receive a grade. While it is difficult to assess the artistic merit of creative writing with an academic letter or number grade, that course did demonstrate for me that creative vs. academic need not be opposed or separated from the other. Certainly, not all classes have creative writing aspects, but even academic classes do require some creativity on the part of a student to begin. For instance, a grade five science project reporting on bird species might need to be formally researched but beginning the project requires a certain openness to the creative endeavor. Anne Lamott’s (1995) *Bird by bird: Some instruction on writing and life* is a manual often cited and recommended for its exploration of how artistic notions manifest and are given practical expression. Lamott (1995) tells the story of how the book got its title. It involved her older brother, who as a ten-year old, was assigned to write a report on birds. He was struggling because the deadline was looming and he did not know how to begin, their father encouraged him to “take it bird by bird”.

Lamott (1995) became known for this useful metaphor, but in my workshops, the essay that gets the most attention, is the one where she identifies the rule of “shitty first drafts,” in the chapter with the same title. Giving ourselves and our students “permission” to let loose and write whatever happens to be written on that blank page is giving them an important tool for overcoming a writer’s block. Murray (2004) suggests that the first or what he calls the zero draft is about discovery, where the writer is called to find out what they know about a subject (which is usually more than they think they know) and how they might use that as a starting point to head into a more refined exploration of the subject. Steven King (2014) further advises that writing should be done with a closed door. By this he means a first draft should be written as if no one will read it, as opposed to an open door which is reserved for re-writing. The implication is that you will not be judged for it and that no awful grade will be given for it. It is simply the thing that fills in the blank page. It is a way, Lamott (1995) tells us, to silence the oppressive voice of the perfectionist, who would block us from writing anything at all.

To demonstrate the value of this initial part of the process, I tell teacher candidates attending the workshop that when assigning writing tasks or taking them on themselves, this closed-door draft is what we must make space for. This is what we must allot time to. To model how this is done, I speak of Natalie Goldberg’s (2006) rules for “writing the bones.” I first learned of this technique when I was a mentor in the University of Toronto’s *Poet in the Community* initiative led by poet and psychotherapist Ronna Bloom. (See <https://ronnabloom.com/workshops>.) We would conduct regular sessions where students could come in, follow the prompts we gave, and the “rules” adapted from Goldberg (2006) to encourage free writing. The work that was produced in these sessions always amazed me as they did the students, often haggard by university class pressures, who wrote them. People were consistently surprised that when permission was given to them to write those first drafts, the discoveries they made in them about the topic at hand or how they wielded the prompts to their own needs resulted in writing that

they could consider good. I remember an Immunology graduate student who had written the beginnings of a short story or the Philosophy major who used the session to write an abstract on symbolism in the work of Jean-François Lyotard.

The writing sessions happen in 25-minute intervals. A student may need two or more of these sessions, depending on the writing task at hand, to work through the following rules adapted from Goldberg (2006):

1. Keep your hand moving
2. Don't think
3. Don't censor
4. You're free to write garbage (don't worry about grammar, spelling, structure, etc.)
5. You don't have to share what you wrote with anyone

Between intervals, I would stop the students. I found that people did, in fact, like to share some of their work. In the workshop conducted with University of Ottawa teacher candidates there was only time for one 20-min session but in the case study below, I illustrate how this plays out in a way that was surprising to one of the participants with the particular prompt that I offered. More generally, all participants could see how such sessions would benefit their own students. We spoke about adapting the prompts to suit the subject matter or the writing task at hand. We all agreed that it is necessary to make time and space for ourselves and our students to have such sessions where creativity is allowed to roam unchecked and from where a garbage first draft can begin to be shaped into the form and structure which lends itself to formal assessment.

Teaching the Forest for the Trees, as Editing Mode

As a teacher in various schooling and with different classroom levels, I have been grading written tasks for over twenty years. I started as an elementary teacher and moved my way into high school English with periods of time spent overseas as a language instructor. More recently, I taught at the college and undergraduate level. I am currently a graduate level professor. At all these levels, I tell my students that marking their written tasks, whether they be essays, reports or projects, can be assessed by what I call the 3C's: creativity, content, communication. The first C, *creativity*, assesses how the student has made unique connections or developed a thesis that is unexpected. It is a level of critical insight or thinking that, if done well, shows how the student writer has linked ideas in an interesting and innovative manner. In many ways, this aspect happens during that "shitty first draft" brainstorming/free writing session. After creativity come the two other C's, content and communication. Content, the subject matter, is assessed by how well the student has incorporated the source or classroom material. Communication is assessed by how the student has followed guidelines of a certain citation method or how they have composed their paragraphs for clarity and understanding. If the first creativity comes together during the first draft, then content and communication are the second draft and third (perhaps, final) revision of the written product.

In my workshops, I stress that the writer brain is what we make space for but the editor

brain, required for the student to excel in the writing task, is what we teach towards. We teach students the *content* of the subject at hand and show them examples of what good *communication* entails for that subject. So, for instance, if I am teaching a unit on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and this requires a formal essay as the assessment of learning product, after reading the play as a class, I might give them topic prompts and have them do *creative* free writing sessions. I'd then teach them *content* regarding what would make a good *Hamlet* thesis and how they would develop it. Finally, I'd show them an exemplar of a formal essay in MLA, pointing out specifically how the writing piece should be formatted, from margins to citations. I would never comment on the work produced in the first session, but I might give ongoing feedback on how they were developing their thesis in relation to content. When it comes to communication, this is when peer-editing facilitates productive learning exchanges.

During the 'editing brain' phase, teachers should ask how a student's inclusion of what they need to know, that being course content/curriculum expectations, factor into the writing product? How well have they communicated for clarity, understanding, adhered to the conventions stipulated by the rubrics given to them? In the workshop, I recommend the book, *The forest for the trees: An editor's advice to writers* (Lerner, 2010) to help student teachers understand that while the creative aspect is necessary, moving the piece from draft to publishing requires a different mindset. Of course, this book pertains to novel writing but any number of texts which deal with editing in a particular subject area could be of use here, as can the citation style manuals most used in the subject area within which the teacher candidates work.

To prepare for the effort needed by the editing brain, it helps to give students many examples of what well-edited pieces look. I advise, deconstructing the examples as a class in a sort of "group editing" mode by asking questions like "what works here? Why does it work? What might the author have done better? What would you have done instead?" Once the conventions are understood, students have prepared themselves for their second and third drafts.

The hope is that these drafts will not be influenced by the initial writing block and/or anxiety, that they will flow more easily because there is not necessarily anymore 'creative' angst or the difficulty of 'just beginning' at play. The second third draft stages are about incorporating content and refining communication, tasks that are more guided by established standards and practices and can be simply followed.

The Case Study

To demonstrate how the workshop proceeded, I offer a case study of Samantha (her name has been changed to protect her privacy). Samantha is a first-year teacher candidate who anticipates teaching at the junior level (grades 6-8) when she completes the requirements of her teacher education program. Through her volunteer work tutoring refugees, Samantha has much experience with children's struggles as they navigate the school system in a new country and oftentimes after traumatic experiences.

When I first asked what writing anxiety meant to her or how she sees it manifesting in her students, Samantha's answer was particularly poignant:

There is a little boy I work with who has yet to be diagnosed officially but I think he might be on the autism spectrum. He is also a Syrian refugee learning a new language. He speaks well enough but when we try to help with anything related to schoolwork, he shies away. He wants to use technology—phone or ipad cameras. He likes to [take] pictures of things all the time. When you ask him to explain what he’s taken a picture of, he can do so fairly well. He’ll say “it is a bird in a tree” or “that is my sister, she is fifteen years old.” But when I ask him to write about what he’s taken a picture of, he shies away. He won’t even hold a pencil. Sometimes I try to tell him to write using the keyboard feature on a device, but he says he only wants to press buttons. On the one hand I can understand that as being a type of writing anxiety but it’s also so much more that I cannot ever begin to imagine that I would ever really understand it.

Indeed, we cannot ever really know what our students are feeling about their writing or writing tasks assigned to them, but we can be reflexive about how much each individual student is impacted by it—sometimes by circumstances that are much larger than the ‘small’ confines of a subject task. Reflexivity can help us be kinder to our students; it might lead us towards acceptable alternatives that a student might be more receptive to.

The second activity in the workshop involves a free writing session using Goldberg’s five rules. I stressed that for the workshop activity, students could write anything they wanted but, in a classroom, setting with their students, they would need to provide a prompt related to the content in which they were working. To simulate this, I gave them the following prompt from Rilke’s (1929) *Letters to a Young Poet*:

And your doubt can become a good quality if you train it. It must become knowing, it must become criticism. Ask it, whenever it wants to spoil something for you, why something is ugly, demand proofs from it, test it, and you will find it perhaps bewildered and embarrassed, perhaps also protesting. But don't give in, insist on arguments, and act in this way, attentive and persistent, every single time, and the day will come when, instead of being a destroyer, it will become one of your best workers—perhaps the most intelligent of all the ones that are building your life.

I asked workshop participants, “How does (or does not) this resonate as advice you would give to one of your students?” I then reiterated the rules of not judging what they wrote, “just let your pen go,” before giving them a silent twenty minutes to free write. In Samantha’s case, she did not want to share anything specific, but she did comment that the exercise brought up some ideas she’d had that she thought were long buried. Personal connection and deliberations about how much doubt had clouded her aspirations for a long time. She also clarified that there was one particular line of thinking—a few sentences—from that short time span that, had she more of a chance, she would have explored more thoroughly.

It is that surprising nugget that might lead students, when given the opportunity to write a garbage first or even zero draft, towards second and third drafts that are more refined and based on it. When I tell this to the workshop participants, most can see that they have something—a line or thought—that they might build on. In the next stage of the workshop I ask how they might take that single idea and use it to teach subject content.

To stimulate participants' thinking about the content aspect, I ask them to think of three subject-specific words that they might define and/or explore with their students. Samantha was able to recall a lesson unit her associate teacher conducted on the topic of Irish immigrants to Canada in a grade eight history class. She said the teacher had given her students a glossary of terms in relation to the unit and she was able to remember the following from them: Blight, Famine, Workhouse.

Students in the class read materials on each topic, then were tasked with doing a writing response to a primary source newspaper article from the era. Very quickly, Samantha was able to see how she could use her initial free writing production (which was based on my prompt and I had no previous knowledge of her associate teacher's lesson plan!) and the three glossary terms to write a response based on what "doubts" (related to the word *blight* she had chosen) children immigrants going through *famine* might have experienced in *workhouses* before coming to Canada. It is also possible that Samantha's earlier reflection regarding her work with Syrian refugees influenced the trajectory of her subsequent workshop exercises. Nevertheless, Samantha's experience demonstrated that magic can happen in freewriting sessions—the kind of magic that can come together in unexpected ways and that, with a final "editor's brain" revision might result in a worthy written product.

Conclusion

Seize the Pen! is a workshop built on the idea that writing anxiety or writer's block may be relieved if we loosen our expectations about how composed a piece of writing should be at its conception and allow our students the space to write terribly. I used to tell my students (and I think a teacher at some point in my past must have said the same to me): "your pens know where they want to go, so just let them go." Perhaps it is a virtual relaxation of responsibility and or blame that allows my students to constantly be surprised by how much their pens seem to 'get.' How much their pens are able to articulate a cohesive thought and/or the beginnings of a comprehensive one. Of course, it is not the pen doing the thinking and when students realize this, it empowers them to move forward. They begin to imagine the great writing that might emerge when they are consciously in control of their writing task if so much can happen when they are not in control. Using this process, teachers make space for writing magic to happen. Perhaps it is a muse that visits when a student is sitting in their chairs with a blank page before them that wants to be filled. We teach them to sift through what is penned on the page, to find what is useful and can be expanded or to note what must be further refined. We teach them that the following drafts will be slower, more deliberate because that is where the rules come in. We tell them that we, as teachers, can help by providing guidelines and templates to show them how the writing fits to a particular standard. We teachers can and should be more cognizant of our individual students' beliefs and preconceived notions around writing, and we should work to help them understand that there is a way past the blank page that does not have to be a struggle.

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Contributors

Biographies



Redab Al-Janaideh is a doctoral candidate in the Developmental Psychology and Education Program at OISE/University of Toronto. Her dissertation research focuses on the development of oral language, literacy skills, and the well-being of newly resettled Syrian refugee children in Canada. She is specifically interested in predictors of reading comprehension and the effects of interrupted education. Other research focuses on the development of discourse skills (conversation, narrative, expository) in bilingual Arabic-speaking children, and how they contribute to reading comprehension.



Jermeen Baddour is an MA student in the Developmental Psychology and Education program at OISE, University of Toronto. Her current research focuses on language and literacy development of Syrian refugee children in a longitudinal study conducted across Canada. Her passion lies in managing programs for at-risk children and youth of diverse backgrounds and needs within the Greater Toronto Area. She has an honours BSc. from U of T with a double major in Neuroscience and Psychology.



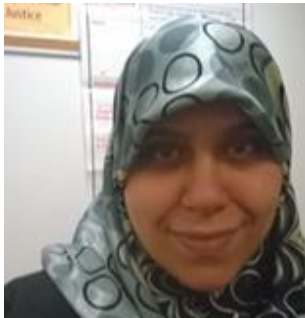
Diana Burchell is the project coordinator for the International Bilingual Education project at the University of Toronto. Her current research focuses on assessing at-risk and multilingual learners in French as a Second Language (FSL) programs using dynamic assessment methods. Diana is a certified teacher in French (Immersion, Extended and Core), English and Special Education. Diana is passionate about her work with marginalized population at the intersection of FSL, Exceptionalities and Mental Health. She has a BEd in French, a BA in French Studies, and a BA in English Studies from Glendon College (York University).



Jennifer Burton is a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada in the Language and Literacies Education Program with a collaborative specialization in Educational Policy. Her research focuses on critical, creative, and translanguaging pedagogies to support international students in language programs in higher education. She has taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in South Korea and English as a Second Language (ESL) in Canada in a variety of contexts for over a decade.



Becky (Xi) Chen is the principal investigator in the Multilingualism and Literacy Lab and a professor in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development. At OISE, her research is focused on monolingual and bilingual children's language and literacy development. Her research has three broad goals: 1) to evaluate the language, literacy and academic performance of different subgroups, 2) to establish an extensive reading model by exploring the relationships between various language and cognitive factors and reading, and 3) to identify at-risk readers and provide them with timely interventions.



Heba Elsherief holds an MA in English Literature and a PhD in Language and Literacies Education from the University of Toronto. Her Bombardier SSHRC-funded research considered social theoretical underpinnings and diverse representations in Young Adult literature and how it might impact English language and critical literacy pedagogy and curriculum. Her current work and research revolve around the role of narrative in explorations and productions of language expression and multiliteracies. She has previously served as managing editor on two open-source peer-reviewed academic journals. A former Islamic high school English teacher and college instructor of literature and gender studies, she is now a part-time professor at the University of Ottawa.



Mimi Masson is part-time professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. During her teaching career of over 10 years, she taught French, English, and second/foreign language pedagogy in various contexts. She has worked in the public and private sectors as a teacher and curriculum developer in Japan and Canada and with younger students (kindergarten, junior high school) and adults (university students, professionals). Her research interests include language teacher identities, professional learning and arts-based research/teaching practices. In 2017, Mimi won the SSHRC *Storytellers Award* in recognition for her research contributions. (See the video at <http://bit.ly/2oPnoUU>).



Dr. Shakina Rajendram is a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. She completed her PhD in Language and Literacies Education with a collaborative specialization in Comparative, International and Development Education. She currently teaches the Supporting English Language Learners, Second Language Teaching Methodologies, and Academic English Research and Acquisition courses at OISE. Her ongoing research focuses on the integration of technology in collaborative translanguaging pedagogies to support diverse language learners in K-12 educational contexts.



Krystina Raymond is a Ph.D. student in Developmental Psychology and Education at OISE. Her research interests include early literacy development in bilinguals and their strategy use. Krystina holds a B.A. and M.A. in Child Studies from Concordia University. She was a research scientist working for the Honorable S. Neuman at New York University Steinhardt. Krystina has led a team of educators in the implementation and evaluation of vocabulary interventions in the Bronx, NY and Philadelphia, PA. She is currently researching the role of dynamic assessment and morphological skills in bilingual children in Canada.



Steffi Retzlaff is an Educational Specialist, Teacher and Teacher Trainer for a wide range of academic and professional contexts. Her areas of expertise include German, ESL/EFL, Indigenous studies, discourse studies and various action and movement oriented approaches to language teaching. She is an expert in the field of drama pedagogy and performative pedagogy. Steffi has taught in higher education institutions both in Germany and Canada. She also teaches Nia and Yoga; her motto is: out of the mind and into the body.



Wales Wong is currently a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. She specializes in English as a Second Language (ESL) education at the secondary level and has taught adolescents and adults for the past 15 years. Wales' MA research was on the code-switching practices of Chinese adult plurilingual students in their written narratives. Her current research focuses on the development and implementation of translanguaging pedagogies to support plurilingual adult learners in continuing education programs.



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