Restorying Foreign Language Education and the Role of English Language Teachers in China: A Narrative Journey

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An open-ended inquiry...
A question
“What do you teach?”
Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Ontario:

- Cummins, J. & Coelho, E. (December, 2005)
EFL and ESL

My journey “on landscapes in transition”: from EFL to ESL contexts

- EFL – EIL
- ESL – EAL - ELL

Byram and Risager (1999) indicate that the history of foreign language teaching has been dominated by a search for methods.
“Is the grass greener on the other side of the fence?”

Whenever I pass by the primary schools here, I always see happy children’s faces. I rarely see a child unhappily carrying a big schoolbag because of school pressure. They are sunny boys and girls. Their life is full of sunshine and happiness. They don’t take study as a burden. However in China, we think we have to study very hard. Student life is always very hard. Yes, one has to study hard, but it has become a conception that one cannot learn well if one doesn’t go through a very hard time.

I am a father of a 10-year-old boy. I always think it is important to find the best way to teach young children. I really appreciate the western teaching methodology. We should adopt it in the primary school or even kindergarten (Interview, Xu, 2000).
This one-sided view changed as my journey continued…

- A journey towards cross-cultural and interdisciplinary teacher development within a broader curricular understanding of language learning (Xu & Stevens, 2005)
My narrative inquiry into the cross-cultural schooling experience lived by Chinese newcomer families

- Children of Julian’s age in China have learned a lot, both in language and math, but here in Canada, Julian is playing all day long. There is no homework…. Children of Julian’s age need spoon-feeding, as they do not know the importance of study, yet. …. Canadian schools are good for children like Julian who are not willing to study hard but play all day long (Conversation with Julian’s grandma at the Parent Centre of Bay Street Community School, Nov 12, 2002).
ELLs: English Language Learners

- **Canadian-born English language learners**
  - Children in Aboriginal communities who speak a first language other than English, such as Cree or Ojibwe. Others speak a variety of English significantly different from that of the school environment.
  - Children born in immigrant families that do not speak English at home or use a different variety of English.
  - Children born in communities that have maintained a distinct cultural and linguistic tradition, such as Mennonite, and Francophonne communities.

- **Newcomers from other countries**
Canada
Place of Birth by Period of Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Before 1961</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Before 1961</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1991-2001</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1991-2001</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changing Attitudes towards Immigration and Cultural Diversity on Landscapes in Transition

- Segregation
- Assimilation (e.g. Residential Schools)
- Acculturation/Enculturation
- Cultural Pluralism
- Multiculturalism
Top Ten Source Countries for Canada
(Census 2006, Statistics Canada)

- People's Republic of China: 15%
- India: 12%
- Philippines: 7%
- Pakistan: 5%
- United States: 3%
- South Korea: 3%
- Romania: 2%
- United Kingdom: 2%
- Colombia: 2%
- Other: 47%
How have these attitudes impacted English teaching and learning on landscapes in transition?

- Segregation
- Assimilation
- Acculturation/Enculturation
- Cultural Pluralism
- Multiculturalism
Create an inclusive learning environment
How to support ELLs in the mainstream classroom?

- Many Roots, Many Voices
- Supporting ELLs: A practical Guide for Ontario educators Grades 1-8
- ELL policy
- Supporting ELLs in kindergarten
- ELLs with limited prior schooling

-- Ministry of Education ELL documents, Ontario, Canada
Build bridges: prior knowledge as a foundation
- Welcome first languages in the classroom
- Use a dual-language approach

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity as Resources
(e.g. Cummins, 1996; Cummins, 2006, Coelho, 2004; Schecter & Cummins, 2003)
Understanding the bilingual advantages
(Ministry of Education, 2008)

- developing mental flexibility;
- developing problem-solving skills;
- communicating with family members;
- experiencing a sense of cultural stability and continuity;
- understanding cultural and family values;
- developing awareness of global issues;
- expanding career opportunities.
Understanding what English language learners bring to Ontario classrooms

(Ministry of Education Ontario, 2008)

❖ Teachers are given a unique opportunity to tap the rich resource of knowledge and understandings that ELLs bring to school, and which, in turn, enrich the learning of all students in the classroom.

❖ The role of the school and the teacher is critical in supporting their identities and development as bilingual learners, and in helping ELLs shape a vision of the future in which they will take their place as Canadian citizens in a global economy.
Connelly & Clandinin (1988) Teachers as curriculum planners:

Understanding one’s self before understanding how to educate others
Who am I?
Inclusive Lesson Plans
**Foods Of Italy**

Italian foods are some of the most famous foods in the world. Many people around the world enjoy eating Italian foods. Some recipes and famous foods are: 

- Pizza
- Spaghetti
- Lasagna
- Gelato
- Cannoli

**Famous Italians**

One famous Italian is artist Leonardo da Vinci. He was born April 15, 1452 in Florence, Italy. Did you know that his actual birth name was Leonardo di Ser Piero? Two of the most famous paintings Leonardo da Vinci ever made were the "Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper."
Curriculum Expectations:
- Compare key social and cultural characteristics of Algonquian and Iroquoian groups (e.g., language, culture and hunting, governance, matriarchal and patriarchal societies, arts, storytelling, trade, recreation, roles of men, women and children)

What We Taught

ALGONQUIN
Hunting
The Algonquin's believed that hunting was a very spiritual event, and it was never seen as a sport to this tribe. This also meant that all of the body parts were used by the tribe to show respect for the animal and the Great Spirit. Common uses for parts of the moose included, clothing, blankets, shelter covering, snowshoe laces, and embroidery thread (moose hair), sewing (intestines), bones for fish hooks, arrowheads, sewing needles, and the horns became knife handles. Most of the meat that was collected was dried in smoke to preserve it for the winter, as well as berries that could be dried and saved. The tribe would store this food in a birch bark wigwam for the winter.
Each band had their own hunting ground, where only they hunted, if anyone trespassed with the intent of hunting on their grounds they were met with disapproval. If a band was having difficulty finding food within their hunting grounds, then they would ask permission to hunt in another band's area in exchange for the animal pelts.

Agriculture
The women or women in the tribe were responsible for preparing the ground for planting, planting, weeding, and harvesting corn, beans, squash, and tobacco.
Iroquois Longhouses & Villages

The Iroquois were not nomadic people, which means that they lived in one place for a long period of time, because they relied heavily on agriculture. Approximately every 20 years the Iroquois had to move, because their soils became exhausted (all the nutrients were gone and crops could no longer grow).

They built huge longhouses which were made first by a framework of evergreens and then covered with the bark from elm trees. They were 200 ft in length and made to house over 20 families. Along the inside of the walls, sleeping platforms were erected. There were no windows in the longhouses, but they did have small doors on both ends. Fire pits lining the edge of these opening were covered with skin. Fire pits lining the edge of these opening were covered with skin.

Assignment

Your job is to create a Diorama of an Iroquois Longhouse!

You will have 2 periods to complete it. If you are not finished please take it home to complete for Monday.

Possible Things to Include:
- Beds
- Fire pits
- Hunting Tools
- Farm Tools
- Animal Skins
- Food

Be Creative!
It is every teacher’s responsibility to be culturally and religiously sensitive to their students. As a teacher you must take the initiative to gain knowledge about different cultures, ask questions, and utilize resources.
Successful outcomes for ELLs

- use English to communicate effectively in a variety of social settings;
- use English to achieve academically in all content areas;
- take charge of their own learning, independently and in groups;
- use effective learning strategies;
- integrate confidently into classrooms or courses;
- use English effectively to advocate for themselves;
- be successful in their chosen post-secondary destination;
- function effectively in an information and technology-based society;
- use critical-literacy and critical-thinking skills to interpret the world around them;
- participate in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of their own communities and of Canada.
What are the implications for English teaching and learning in EFL contexts like China?
Being *Chinese on* Landscapes in Transition

- What is globalized values? Are Chinese values part of the globalized values?
- Where do we position ourselves in a more and more globalized world?
- Is Modernization equal to Westernization or Americanization?
Being *Chinese on* Landscapes in Transition

- In the process of modernization and globalization, what role has English played?
- What role should English language teachers take?
How may EFL teachers help Chinese EFL learners to understand and mediate both Chinese cultural traditions and the Western cultures and develop a deep understanding and awareness of their own culturally determined and individually constructed values, beliefs, and knowledge in the globalized world?
An important objective of intercultural competence teaching is to see both target and home culture from an informed understanding (Byram, 1997), thus developing an intercultural understanding and awareness (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2006).
What role may Chinese EFL educators take to help change biased perceptions and help Chinese learners to recover and reconstruct their own identities through intercultural competence teaching (Zhou, Xu & Bayley, in press)?
Hall and Armes (1999) hold on to a belief that globalization should accommodate both Easternization and Westernization in the East-West conversations between Western New Pragmatism and Asian New Confucianism.
How shall we restory English language teaching in China and the role of EFL teachers in recovering and reconstructing Chinese identity in a more and more globalized world?

In what way may Chinese EFL teachers and teacher educators help harmonize Chinese learning with Western knowledge (Xu, in press)?
An Ongoing Inquiry

- Xu (in press), Bridging the East and West dichotomy: Harmonizing Eastern learning with Western knowledge.
- Xu (2010a): Cultural and linguistic difference
- Xu (2010b): Cultural literacies
- Xu & Connelly (2010): On the need for curious and creative minds in multicultural and cross-cultural educational settings: Narrative possibilities
- Xu & Connelly (2009): Narrative inquiry for teacher education and development: Focus on English as a foreign language in China
- Connelly & Xu (2008): The landscape of curriculum and instruction
- Zhou, Xu, & Bayley (in press): Intercultural competence and EFL teaching in China
On landscapes in transition, what shall we do to harmonize Eastern learning with Western knowledge in the tensions created by imported outside ways of knowing and being meeting inside ways of knowing and being?
Questions and Discussions
References


