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Transformative Education from Theory to Practice: Daring to Re-Imagine and Re-Innovate Third Volume of the *Global Journal of Transformative Education*

Michael T. Ndemanu¹ and Serafin Coronel-Molina²
Editors-in-Chief, *Global Journal of Transformative Education*

According to the Transformative Learning Theory developed by Jack Mezirow (1991), connecting theory with practice is vital because transformative learning occurs during the connection process. A theory can be defined as a set of assumptions or hypotheses about a reality. In other words, it is a mental map representing the world (Granick, 2005; Knapper, 2000). Meanwhile practice can be defined as something that one does. Theory can inform practice because it provides a rationale for a decision or action to be taken. It is often modified based on the outcome of practice. Theory, therefore, should inform practice and vice versa. It is within this theory to practice framework that articles for this issue were framed.

For this volume, out of several manuscripts submitted, three were found to meet the standards and rigors of transformative education ideals as enunciated on our website, www.gjte.education and were closely aligned with the current theme. The articles focus on diverse topics ranging from creative storytelling as a transformative education strategy, transformative syllabus development approaches to translanguaging in the K-12 classroom. The contributions are relevant to scholars, educators, practitioners, educational policymakers, graduate students, and grassroots organizations interested in transformative education across the globe. The first article, titled *The Little Red Hen and a Corona Giant: Creative Story-telling as a transformative Strategy in an Early Childhood Classroom*, is authored by Zhulamanova & Raisor. These authors find storytelling to be instrumental not just in communication, but also as a way for kindergarteners to display a great depth of comprehension. The study details the use of a creative storytelling strategy implemented in an early childhood classroom which was interrupted by the COVID-19

pandemic. The end result is a two-phase study which concluded with pre-kindergarten aged children using storytelling to discuss and display their perceptions of Coronavirus in an academic setting. In the article on translanguaging, Gentry, the author, shares the findings of a research on translanguaging, translating, and interpreting in K-12 classrooms.

The second article is *Literary Review of Translanguaging, Translating, and Interpreting in Education*, by Gentry. The author defines translanguaging as the act of using the two languages strategically to maximize communication during the learning process. It is used as an interactive tool among those who are not yet proficient in the dominant language. Translanguaging is fast becoming a universal practice in K-12 school districts with high immigrant population in spite of the perennially lingering English-only policies. The need for translated documents and the importance of hiring interpreters to sustain translanguaging practice is emphasized in this article.

In the third article, *Transformative syllabus design: Maximizing learning outcomes in higher education*, Ndemanu discusses the contours of developing a 21st century course syllabus that empowers students in the learning process to become critical thinkers, problem-solvers, innovators, and collaborators. The author draws from transformative learning theory to provide detailed information on the characteristics of a syllabus, its universal components, interpreting course code, uses of a syllabus, accessibility, and backward design. He also draws from Bloom's taxonomy to offer a pragmatic guide to syllabus creation with concrete examples on how instructors can employ a backward design approach for syllabus development to effectively create a syllabus of a course they have never taught before. The author concludes by reiterating that the overarching emphasis of teaching with a syllabus is to promote

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higher-order thinking and deeper learning in higher education because a syllabus that promotes such practices and knowledge transfer maximizes learning outcomes.

This issue encompasses two book reviews of recent high-impact texts on transformative education. The first text is: Caralyn Zehnder, Cynthia Alby, Karynne Kleine, Julia Metzker. (2021). *Learning that Matters: A Field Guide to Course Design for Transformative Education*. In this text reviewed by Zhaoyi Zhang, the authors argue that in today's 21st century, the traditional way of teaching has mostly given way to transformative education in which teachers should not only impart knowledge, but also facilitate the acquisition of skills by students (David, 2016). Educators in transformative education play the role of helping students to understand and acknowledge "the dynamics between their inner and outer worlds" (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p.261). This book provides guidance to teachers in the higher education system to help them design courses that can create meaningful learning experiences for students and actively engage them in social issues.

The second book is: Osei-Kofi, N., Boovy, B., & Furman, K. (Eds.). (2022). *Transformative approaches to social justice education: Equity and access in the college classroom*. It was reviewed by Michelle A. Medved. The book documents the Difference, Power, and Discrimination program at Oregon State University which has been enlightening undergraduate students on social justice education for 30 years. Born out of student advocacy and the faculty that supports them, the program is an established collection of diversity education courses and faculty training seminars. The program has survived budget cuts, critics, and other challenges throughout its 30 years. Transformative Approaches to Social Justice Education describes the methods of the program pragmatically and unflinchingly so readers of the book can apply them to their classrooms.

Acknowledgments

The *Global Journal of Transformative Education* (GJTE) is a singular publication venue since its main objective is to share educational research and research-based practices on transformative education from local and global perspectives. Despite the great amount of time and effort we have invested in the conceptualization, development, implementation, production, and publication of this third volume, we could not have done all this by ourselves. The publication of this volume is the result of the hard work and dedication of many people. First of all, our profound gratitude goes

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The Little Red Hen and a Corona Giant: Creative Storytelling as a Transformative Strategy in an Early Childhood Classroom

Ilfa Zhulamanova and Jill M. Raisor

Abstract

Storytelling is a natural means of communication between generations and is deeply rooted in culture. In today's classrooms, the act of storytelling is often overshadowed by a narrow focus on academics. However, storytelling could be viewed as a means of transformative education by creating autonomous, independent thinkers as demonstrated in this manuscript. Children can use storytelling as a way to demonstrate depth of understanding, apply critical thinking skills, and to be active learners in their own education. This study details the use of a creative storytelling strategy implemented in an early childhood classroom which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The end result is a two-phase study which concluded with pre-kindergarten aged children using storytelling to discuss and display their perceptions of Coronavirus in an academic setting.

Keywords: Storytelling, Early Childhood Education, COVID pandemic

Introduction

Storytelling is deeply rooted in the belief that children learn through stories verbally shared across generations and often involving an interesting mixture of folklore and history. In today's classrooms, the act of storytelling is often overshadowed by a narrow focus on academics in classrooms. However, children can use storytelling as a way to demonstrate depth of their understanding, thinking, lived experiences and needs. For example, compare the following two teaching strategies. First, a book is read to children which might be disconnected from their lives and prior experiences while encouraging passive listening skills (Global Institute for Transformative Education, 2021). Second, the same story is shared through a storytelling strategy where the children are given the opportunity to actively engage, take ownership, and construct their own meanings from the content. The second example clearly demonstrates the type of transformative education we

hope to encourage in classrooms. The overarching goal of this study was to use a storytelling as a creative strategy in an early childhood classroom to open space for children for "dialoging" (Bakhtin, 1984) with the world to express themselves, their emotions and feelings, and lived experiences in a creative way.

The following manuscript details the use of a creative storytelling strategy implemented in an early childhood classroom which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The end result is a two-phase study which concluded with pre-kindergarten aged children using storytelling to discuss and display their perceptions of Coronavirus.

Literature Review

Oral storytelling is an ancient and may be the earliest form of teaching. It serves a dual purpose of entertaining and transmitting cultural beliefs and values from one generation to the next in many cultures including Latinx (Melzi, Schick & Scarola, 2018) and African American (Champion, 2003). Under-studied in

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education (Hibbin, 2016a), it continues to maintain cultural practices and traditions over time, socialize children into their cultures, and aid their overall development (Barton & Barton, 2017; Landrum, Brakke, & McCarthy, 2019; Strekalova-Hughes & Wang, 2019). Storytelling attracts children to books (Ritchie, James-Szanton, & Howes, 2003) and excite the imagination, involve the listeners, and motivate children to try storytelling themselves and create their own techniques (Morrow, 2020).

Storytelling is a form of transformational education that helps children to understand dynamics between their inner and outer worlds and the expansion of consciousness and the working toward a meaningful integrated life as evidenced in authentic relationships with self and others" (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p. 261). What is storytelling? The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has provided a definition of oral storytelling as "relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture" (Teaching Storytelling, 1992). This simple definition considers the inherently social nature of storytelling that requires a listening audience to fulfil its definitional requirements. It also tacitly invokes the oral nature of storytelling whereby the tale is 'related' and not 'read,' and the emphasis upon 'voice and gesture' implicitly denies the use of a script. Bromley (2019) defines an oral story as any text that is imaginative, a retelling of a story or a recount of an experience.

Traditional storytelling in an early childhood classroom is a product of students interacting socially with the elements in a book (Lisenbee & Ford, 2018). An example of a traditional storytelling activity comes from research conducted on early childhood students experiencing the story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1987; Ford, 2009). These early childhood students enjoyed performing the book in addition to exploring the life cycle of a caterpillar through literacy centers.

In the profession of early childhood, storytelling was promoted by teacher researcher Vivian Paley (Copper, 2019). In Paley's classroom, children dictate and dramatize their stories. Research findings suggest that Paley's storytelling approach to teaching and learning positively affect young children's vocabulary and language skills and can serve as a feasible alternative to the skills-dominant and teacher-neutral early literacy curricula increasingly prevalent in pre-school classrooms around the country (Nicolopoulou, 2019; Ripstein, 2018). Moreover, as da Costa, Davim, Barbosa, & da Silva (2016) state storytelling has the power to

improve a child's oral language skills, writing, and increase their vocabularies. More recent research (Gardner-Neblett & Sideris, 2017) conducted with children who are African American has found that the ability to tell a clear and coherent story is important for the development of reading skills.

Storytelling significantly increases children's literacy skills along with self-regulation of emotions, communication and negotiation with peers, imagination, fantasy, humor, and creativity (Maureen, Van der Meji & De Jong, 2018). Dyson (2009) highlights how as young writers tell stories they appropriate others' voices (from home, school, community and media), thus expanding their knowledge about social practices, symbolic systems and their social world. There is difference in cognitive requirement between the experience of picture-book reading and that of storytelling, according to neuroscience research (Ten, Van der Putten, Penne, Maes, Vlaskamp, 2016; Miyuki, Sachie, Satochi, Masato, Kazuto, Hirooki & Sinichi, 2018). The experience of storytelling requires more demanding level of active imagination from listeners. When the brain is active, concentration and attention are at work which contributes to information retention and comprehension. Thus, the difference in the prefrontal activation between the picture-book reading and the storytelling may reflect the difference in the cognitive demands for the act of imagining.

While storytelling is a practice common to all cultures and most children enter school with a basic understanding of narrative form (Meek, 1988), it is not widely accepted practice as compared to story reading. Speaking and listening is implicitly devalued as a result of the elevation of instrumental literacy-based practice in the primary curriculum (Hibbin, 2016b). Typically, schools place importance on the development of narrative skills in writing but provide few opportunities for children to create and tell stories orally, once children become writers (Dawkins & O'Neill, 2011).

In a busy curriculum-focused environment, the strategy of storytelling allows space and time to stop and listen to students in meaningful and purposeful way, while facilitating their learning (Bromley, 2019; Cooper, Capo, Karen, Mathes, & Gray, 2007). It is a transformative approach as it challenges students to be active rather than passive learners. Storytelling approach encourages students and teachers to think critically and requires communities to rethink curricula to create space for students to analyze the universe (Global Institute for Transformative Education, 2021).



Free-ranging, teacher-scaffolded activities, storytelling activities and curriculum in the early childhood classroom validate who the children are, what they know, and what they care about. Thus, “the need for early childhood teachers to retain their historical focus on oral language-based curricula that are directed at fair and equitable goals for young children—like the storytelling curriculum—has never been greater” (Cooper, Capó, Karen, Mathes, & Gray, 2007, p. 273).

Ironically, the study itself mirrors the unpredictability of researching during the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic. Our research quest was to learn how children respond to stories presented through storytelling strategies involving two-step method: 1) presenting a story to children using puppet show and 2) inviting children to respond, orally or in drawings, by re-telling the presented story or by creating their own stories. The working definition of storytelling in this study is oral re-telling of traditional tales, modelled by a storyteller, and taught to children. The study detailed in this manuscript emphasizes the importance of storytelling.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we draw upon Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1895-1975), literary and cultural theorist and philosopher’s work that emphasizes plurality of voices. In essence, Bakhtin’s work is concerned with the oppressive character of monologue, the monopolization of meaning, and the ruling out and suppressing of all competing voices. To counteract a “monologue” of prescribed preschool curricula driven by developmental norms and academic standards and standardized practices like book reading, we aimed to build upon the voices and stories of young children to allow them to learn and transform through creative literacy, play and performance. Like Bakhtin, we believe that life is an ongoing, finalizable dialogue taking place at every moment of human existence.

“To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, souls, spirit, and with his whole body and deeds... He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium” (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 292-293).

Such a view imposes difference, uncertainty, playfulness, surprise, and open-endedness as necessary, positive, and productive aspects of human condition (Sterritt, 1998). However, what crucial to Bakhtinian dialogue is a finely tuned sense of listening. Bakhtin believed that by not listening we reject, disrespect, and disempower the speaker and the message. When we listen to children, we empower them. We learn about their inner thoughts, emotions, fears, anxiety, and joys through the act of storytelling. Transformative education such as this displays a dramatic shift in views of teaching and learning, a shared ownership in education, a true sense of what it means to have student-teacher partnerships within the classroom (Global Institute for Transformative Education, 2021).

As the profession of early childhood education takes a deep interest in a more culturally sensitive, collaborative, strength-oriented, and empowering approach practices, Bakhtin’s ideas seem ever more prominent. In current times of uncertainty and unrest, there is a robust need for dialoging with and listening to the children we serve. Inviting children to engage in creating and telling their own stories is about opening a space for plurality of voices, innovation, wonder, potentiality, freedom, and creativity that transcend monologic thinking and inform and expand traditional mundane classroom approaches of teaching and learning.

Storytelling Procedures

This study was conducted in two phases pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19. Beginning in the Spring 2020, three researchers visited the setting to begin to establish a comfortable rapport with the children, classroom, and school. After obtaining families consent, around February 2020, the researchers introduced the idea of traditional storytelling to the teacher. During this time, once a week for five weeks, the researchers started the project by presenting a folk story using a puppet show as the main storytelling method. The storytelling technique implemented in our study complemented that of Bromley (2019). The teacher told stories and children use teacher’s story as a springboard to develop their own stories.

The plan was to visit each week to engage in storytelling activities during the circle time. After presenting the same story a few times, we planned to invite children to create their own stories using the presented story as a springboard. The first story presented to children was a simple version of The Little Red Hen story, an American folk tale meant to teach children the



importance of hard work and personal initiative. The main characters used in this puppet show – the hen, cat and mouse – were hand-made by team members. Both the cat and mouse were made from wool and the hen was knitted using a wool thread (see Figure 1). The story characters were available to the children afterwards to imitate and play with the puppets.



Figure 1. *The Little Red Hen* characters

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the research came to an abrupt halt in spring 2020 after seven visits to the site. The study was able to resume in fall 2020 during COVID-19; however, many barriers existed. The participants were all new to the classroom and non-essential visitors were not allowed in the classroom due to COVID-19 precautions. Therefore, research continued in an online synchronous mode through the use of Zoom. The children were gathered around a Swivl which held an iPad. Swivl is a robot which can hold an iPad and rotates automatically to the marker. The marker is similar in shape to a remote control and allows for virtually interactions to feel more in sync. Minimal issues occurred when utilizing the technology; however, one concern was that the iPad screen size was limited for the children to view.

Study Context and Participants

The school was intentionally chosen because of its proximity to the researchers, openness to research, and a shared history with the researchers. The school consists of 464 students, preschool through eighth grade (see Table 1). The classroom is nestled within the preschool wing with approximately 110 children. The participants in phase one included 15 preschool children, ages three and four (see Table 2). The participation rate for the class was 94%. The participants in

phase two included 11 preschool children ages three and four (see Table 3). The participation rate for the class was 85%. Additionally, one lead teacher and one assistant, consistent in both phases of the study, contributed greatly to arranging the technology and reporting information back to the researchers.

Table 1. Demographics of school by ethnicity

Ethnicity	%
American Indian	.1
Asian	.6
Black	1.5
Hispanic	8.0
White	86.6
Multiracial	3.2
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0

Table 2. Demographics of participants in phase 1

Gender	N	%
Female	7	46.6
Male	8	53.4

Table 3. Demographics of participants in phase 2

Gender	N	%
Female	6	54.5
Male	5	45.5

Storytelling Technique Phase 2

Due to COVID-19 precautions, all storytelling times in phase two of the study, were completed virtually through the use of Zoom. During phase two, the research team virtually presented a Corona Giant therapeutic story to help children to deal with anxiety and stress they experience with all the changes and adaptations they deal on a daily basis. The children were presented this story three times within a week for approximately two weeks. The children were given the opportunity to contribute their own stories using the Corona Giant as a springboard. They could share their stories right after the presentation or later to their teachers orally or in drawings.

During phase two, the research team virtually presented a therapeutic story to help children to deal with anxiety and stress they experience with all the changes



and adaptations they deal on a daily basis. This story, inserted below, was originally created by Susan Perrow (2012) and was slightly modified by the researchers to adapt to the current pandemic situation.

Corona Giant

Once upon a time, not so long ago, there lived a giant who was the strongest, largest, and most destructive creature ever to have lived on earth.

The strange thing was that no one had never seen the giant, but many had experienced its dark shadow as it traveled around the earth, leaving destructions everywhere. People called it the Corona Giant.

The Corona Giant was continually busy every day and night, moving around the world, stamping its dark presence on the Earth, in every city, every village, and every home making children and their families stay away from each other and making them feel lonely and fearful. No one knew where the Corona Giant lived and how to conquer it. No one was safe from it— not the adults or children.

The Giant, who lived high up in the Silver Castle above the clouds, heard news of these terrible events from the birds. She was very worried about the Corona Giant and the evil work it was doing on the Earth below. She decided to call a meeting and sent out an invitation to all the birds of the air everywhere in the world.

On the day of the meeting, the Giant was seated on her silver throne, beautiful in her flowing gown. All around her were gathered many birds: birds from every part of the world, birds of all colors and shapes and sizes, birds of the land and birds of the sea, birds of the day and birds of the night.

Patiently and carefully, the Giant listened to each and every bird. When all the stories had been told, the Giant spoke to the gathering:

“There must be a way to overcome this dark force that is taking over the earth. Every enemy has a weakness! Fly back where you have come from and try to find where the Corona Giant lives.

Then you can observe what weakness it may have. Report back to me as soon as you can...There is not a moment to lose!”

So, the birds flew back to their homes around the world and kept a careful watch where the giant lives. Days passed, weeks passed, months passed.

When it was almost a year, an old owl finally found the giant. He was flying high around mountains searching for something to eat and flew into a deep dark cave. Inside this cave was a huge, dark, mumbling, rumbling, figure. It was of no definite shape. In fact, its shape seemed to change sizes and form with every sound it made. Sometimes, it looked like a giant red squid with many tentacles, other times, it turned into a scary, bear-like figure and stomped angrily. As he stomped, he repeatedly chanted these mumblings and rumblings:

*All for me and me for all,
Eating all things big and small.
Greed is my game and Power is my name*

The owl hid in a far corner of the cave and watched and listened, as owls can do very well. Finally, the ugly, dark creature fell asleep. The owl quickly and quietly flew out of the deep mountain cave. Then, he began the long journey across the sky, all the way to the castle of the Giant. As he flew higher and higher, he kept saying the awful mumblings and rumblings so he would not forget them.

*All for me and me for all,
Eating all things big and small.
Greed is my game and Power is my name*

When the Giant heard the story from the owl, she immediately recognized Giant's weakness:

The Corona Giant only cares for itself - it only wants power for itself.

Then the Giant called for her helpers, the birds and she said: “Fly out around the world and sing this message to people. If they work together and care for each other, then they can slowly, but surely win this dark shadow that is harming the children and families”.



*Strength in caring, strength in togetherness,
Can overcome the giant's selfishness.*

The birds flew out to all parts of the world and as they flew, they sang the message from the Giant for all people on Earth to hear.

And to this day, the birds are signing their song. Sometimes they even drop feather messages which flutter softly to the ground. When people find these feathers lying on the ground (in the garden, on the street, or in the forest they know that this message has been sent directly to them. They pick up the feathers and they remember the message that has been sent to them by the Giant:

Strength in caring, strength in togetherness!

And slowly but surely, the wisdom of the song of the birds is helping the children and adults of the world to overcome the dark power of the Corona Giant.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data in this two-phase basic qualitative study (Merriam, 2002) came from children's drawings, audio recordings of children's stories, photographs of children's work, and recordings of all virtual storytelling visits with the children. Data collection and analysis were not separate processes but were interconnected and simultaneous (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) to gain insight into the main themes that emerged from children's responses to the storytelling intervention. The recordings, images of storytelling episodes were reviewed and analyzed using thematic coding and inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002), that promotes proceeding from specific to general. The two faculty researchers analyzed the data separately and then compared findings to validate thematic findings.

Findings

The overarching goal of this study was to use storytelling as a creative strategy in an early childhood classroom to open space for plurality of voices that transcend monologic thinking driven by adults' agenda and inform and expand traditional mundane classroom approaches of teaching and learning. As Pushor explains, "When they come to school, they come with this multiplicity and contextuality, not independent of it" (2010, p. 7). Therefore, it is important to create a space

for helping children to express themselves and their lived experiences in a creative way. Storytelling is about innovation, wonder, potentiality, freedom, and creativity that arise through plurality of voices, ideas and perspectives. Having such space in a classroom challenges, expands, and transcends traditional routine of teaching and learning practices. The following two themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) Storytelling makes children story makers, story tellers, and story actors and 2) Corona and children.

Storytelling makes children story makers, story tellers and story actors. Children in this classroom always engaged in various pretend play activities using prompts in dramatic play area. It was observed, however, that storytelling intervention provokes children to play with the story prompts and imitate the observed presentation. Having a shared play idea, stemmed from the story plot, provides a topic for conservation motivating children to socialize, engage, construct scenarios elevating their play to mature level that results in learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2008). It became visible that storytelling intervention provokes children to play with the story prompts and imitate the observed presentation. The concrete prompts and story table setting provide some direction inexplicitly making the children storytellers. These items were intentionally left in the setting during phase 1 to encourage interaction and retelling of stories. Engaged in dialoguing with each other (see Figure 2) they either repeated the same plot or come up with their own remarks for the characters. Children carry their ideas on into their dramatic play and the story continues to evolve and change including new toys, materials, and players. The conversation enhanced social interaction and communication among children.



Figure 2. Children presenting *The Little Red Hen*

Analysis of data also illustrates that children use the presented story characters and some elements of it as a springboard for making stories. For instance, see Figure 3 below. The child created his own version of the Corona Giant story by twisting the plot in his own way. In this picture, the Corona Giant is imprisoned, and the queen and birds are celebrating their victory. It is important to notice here, that the illustrations are solely a product of child's imagination since the story was presented orally without the text. The child "translated" the auditory information onto the paper giving a shape and form to story characters he envisioned in his mind while he listened to the story. These mental representations derived from his previous knowledge and experiences.



Figure 3. A child's story

During the storytelling time, children immersed in the spirit of presented stories. The children became not only story makers, but story tellers and story actors as well. Consider the four-year old's child's dictated story below:

It is actually like the queen and the prince live is a mountain on a castle with bears. And the princess was actually abandoned because she stealed [sic] all the joy and then they found the real princess at the witch castle. And then the birds pecked her and then she heard it so much, and then they fall to the ground, and then they go back to the castle and then the end.

This simultaneously simple and complex creation indicates the author's expressive and receptive vocabulary, awareness of words in sentences, phonemic awareness, and understanding of the meaning of the words. It has a beginning, some drama in the middle, and the end and represents a child's world of thinking and living.

Children take the story ideas and words into their dialogues, exchanges, and act them out in their dramatic play by intentional storytelling. For instance, consider this children's dialogue that was observed on 01/31/20. Three girls are playing in dramatic play area:

Child 1: *Pretends to be a hen from the Little Red Hen story and ask her two playmates:*

Who wants to sweep the floor?

Child 2: *(standing on her knees, pretending to be a cat)* Not I!

Child 3: *(sitting and presenting to be a mouse)* Not I!

Child 1: Who wants to help me to eat breakfast?

Child 2 & Child 3: I do, I do!

Child 1: Promise me you help me, and I will share the breakfast with you.

Child 2 & Child 3: Nod their heads.

The presented *Little Red Hen* story plot was used here by these three children to organize their play, communicate, socialize and learn. Stories enhance the child's inner world and result in imaginative play. Thus, the provided stories have a power to stimulate and foster dramatic play in early childhood classrooms.

Corona and children. This theme emerged in most of the children's stories, drawings and dialogues in the forms of a germ, princesses, and giants. Analysis of 10 children's drawings collected resulted in one about a germ, four on princesses, and five on giants. The drawing featuring the word "germ" was of a child keeping the germ from entering the child's house (see Figure 4). Of interest, was the fact that the child felt confident in preventing the germ from entering the home; thereby, able to protect the family. Additional analysis would have been beneficial to explore how the child planned to keep the germ from entering the home. Would it have been health measures emphasized in the classroom, school, and community such as washing hands, staying at least six feet apart, etc.? Or would the child have created an imaginary world in which superpowers would have served as a protective force?

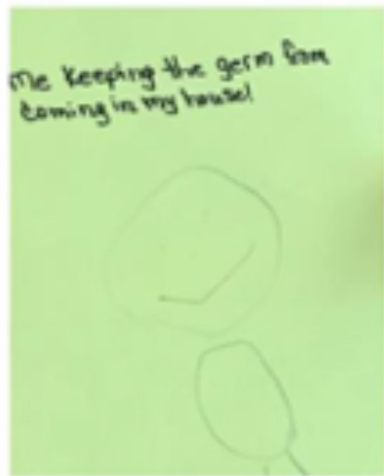


Figure 4. Child's drawing - germ

Four of the drawings collected featured princesses. All princesses were smiling in the drawings. Ideas emerged such as a princess being saved by a knight, the princess getting to see her family (see Figure 5), the princess and her friends, and the princess enjoying the sun. Of interest to our study, was the drawing of a princess getting to see her family. Additional analysis would have been beneficial to determine why the princess was unable to see her family. Was the princess in quarantine which would have mimicked reality or was the princess, as often pictured in fairytales, captured and waiting to be rescued?



Figure 5. Child's drawing – princess

A giant was the most featured object in the children's drawings. Consistently, the giant was angry or mad as evidenced by the children's wording of "The giant is mad! Something is in his way!"; "The giant is mad! He didn't like the people!"; "The giant stomped all over the world!"; "The giant is walking to the city."; "The giant is being watched by the birds!". The last quotation was the only giant pictured as smiling. All other giants had straight lines for a V shaped mouth, a horizontal line (see Figure 6), or a sad face. A likely correlation to the Corona Giant story was that the birds were helpful to the giant; therefore, the giant was pictured as smiling.



Figure 6. Child's drawing - giant

This topic is also captured in one of the dialogues between the researcher and the children:

Researcher: So, what happened when Corona Giant came to your city? What did you do?

Children: Wear a mask!

Researcher: Mask. Oh, yes. That's how we changed.

Children: And be safe.

Teacher: And where can't you go now?

Child: I can't go to Chuck E. Cheese now until Corona's gone.

Child: I can't go to McDonald's playground.

Child: I wanted to go to the movie and they said no, it's closed.

Researcher: Yes, so the Corona Giant is making us do and not to do so many things. This is what I would like you to do children. Since I cannot see you guys, I mean I cannot come to your school. Can you draw your story for me?

Child: Yes!

Child: I already made a book. I can make another book about Corona the Giant.

Discussion

The limited amount of collected data due to COVID-19 pandemic suggests that a storytelling approach to teaching and learning can positively affect young children's learning and development by making them story makers, story tellers, and story actors. To become a story maker, one needs to listen to absorb the language and ideas of others.

A well-crafted and intentionally chosen narrative helps children to make sense of the world, imagine and "give birth" to their own stories to express, communicate and 'dialogue' (Bakhtin, 1984). As it was observed in data, for a child as young as three or four, a simple dot on a paper or drawing is a story. When there is a story, there is a point to communicate, idea to express, and reason to participate in the "carnival" (Bakhtin, 1984) of the social world. Creative storytelling strategies promote active engagement in the learning process which can become transformative in nature. This way, telling stories promotes children's language skills that stimulates overall development (Nicolopoulou, 2019; Ripstein, 2018). Practicing and mastering listening and oral language skills establishes profound foundation for children to become confident readers and writers at later stages (Hibbin, 2016b). It was also found that young children who heard the stories told demonstrated improved story comprehension in their retelling, while children in the story reading group improved their language complexity (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lawrence, 2004).

Moreover, the creative storytelling intervention provokes young children to engage in dramatic play by imitating the observed practice. Normally, preschool children participate in physical play, object play, pretend (or socio-dramatic) play, and guided play. Together, they comprise four broad categories, each of which is based on the developmental purpose it serves and the relationship of each type to children's learning.

This is important for today's world where not all children know how to play (Bodrova, 2001, Karpov, 2005) and their play does not elevate to level when it results in learning (Gudareva, 2005). Only mature, sophisticated level of play triggers cognition and promotes self-regulation (Bodrova & Leong, 2008; Bodrova & Leong, 2003).

Storytelling is different than reading and it requires more active work of the brain. When the brain is active, concentration and attention are at work which contributes to information retention and comprehension (Ten, Van der Putten, Penne, Maes, Vlaskamp, 2016; Miyuki, Sachie, Satoshi, Masato, Kazuto, Hirooki & Sinichi, 2018). Children need to use their imaginative powers to illustrate the story scenes in their mind to project it on paper or play later. However, the child's response/creation does not directly mirror the adults 'story but rather intertwined with his own inner worries, concerns, thinking and understating of the world. This became visible in children's illustrations of Corona Giant narrative as they work was 'painted' by their fears of germs, separation of families, concerns about safety and overall underling anxiety about the pandemic situation. Telling and expressing their inner needs and emotions has a power to foster positive identity, empathic understanding of self and others and bi-directional communication (Hibbin, 2016a).

Therefore, it can be concluded that storytelling invites children to become story makers, story tellers and story actors to think creatively and engage in dialogue with others and the world. The intentional organization of storytelling activity can be used as a tool to promote language, literacy, vocabulary, socio-emotional development, self-expression, identification with story characters, empathic understanding of self and others, culture and identity. It stimulates intrinsic motivation for play. The concrete prompts and story table setting provide some direction inexplicitly inviting the children to play. The classroom with storytelling and play can serve as a feasible alternative to the skills-dominant and teacher-neutral early literacy curricula increasingly prevalent in pre-kindergarten classrooms around the country.

The oral re-telling of traditional tales, modelled by a storyteller and taught to children in school, can be understood as 'non-instrumental' practice in speaking and listening that emphasizes oral language over the reading and writing of stories. Hibbin (2016a) suggests that psychosocial development of young people in school can be encouraged and actively pursued with



opportunities afforded by oral storytelling for self-expression, identification with story characters, empathic understanding of self and others and bi-directional communication.

In a busy curriculum-focused environment, the strategy of storytelling allows space and time to stop and listen to students in meaningful and purposeful way, while facilitating their learning (Bromley, 2019; Cooper, Capo, Karen, Mathes, & Gray, 2007). Free-ranging, teacher-scaffolded activities storytelling activities and curriculum in the early childhood classroom validate who the children are, what they know, and what they care about. Thus, “the need for early childhood teachers to retain their historical focus on oral language-based curricula that are directed at fair and equitable goals for young children—like the storytelling curriculum—has never been greater” (Cooper, Capo, Karen, Mathes, & Gray, 2007, p. 273).

Conclusion

Storytelling is deeply rooted in the belief that children learn through stories verbally shared across generations. It is about innovation, wonder, potentiality, freedom, and creativity that arise through plurality of voices, ideas and perspectives. Having such space in a classroom challenges, expands, and transcends traditional routine of teaching and learning practices. However, in today’s classrooms, the act of storytelling is often overshadowed by a narrow focus on academics in classrooms. Therefore, it is important to create a space for helping children to express themselves and their lived experiences in a creative way. Children can use storytelling as a way to demonstrate the depth of their understanding as well as express emotions such as fear, worry, etc. In closure, the following poem was shared with the researchers by an older child.

*Quarantine nothing to do.
Quarantine is it something for you?
Quarantine nothing to do.*

*Quarantine is a boring thing for me and you.
Watch out for germs, they are as hairy as worms.
Take some turns and you will find those germs!*

Children have stories to share with us and it is our responsibility as educators to listen. Whether it is through stories, drawings, or poetry children are creatively expressing themselves. This manuscript details the use of a creative storytelling strategy implemented in an early childhood classroom in two distinct phases due to the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The result documents a beautiful display of children’s creative storytelling ability and its connectedness to real world events. Work such as this lays the path for transformation in education. It demonstrates the importance of providing young children with the opportunity for an education better suited for global interconnectedness (Global Institute for Transformative Education, 2021).

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Literary Review of Translanguaging, Translating, and Interpreting in Education

Corinne Gentry

Abstract

This paper covers literature on translanguaging, translating, and interpreting in education, primarily K-12 institutions. Translanguaging is defined by Dr. Josh Prada and its strengths are demonstrated in different contexts, including its use in the English as a New Language classroom. This study elucidates the value of translanguaging in the classroom since it offers opportunities for scaffolding and building confidence in English while encouraging English language learners (ELLs) to actively participate in the learning process and to feel more comfortable around peers and staff. Multilingualism is reviewed in the context of language choice in different social contexts to better understand the usefulness of translanguaging. Spanish and English literacy and their impact on native Spanish-speaking children is also explored in this paper which allows understanding of personal experience from ELLs. English-only policies are discussed and cautioned against due to the environment that is created by monolingualism. The importance of interpreters in schools is stressed because it has been determined to provide better educational outcomes for English Language Learners. The importance of translated written documents was covered in this study to better understand family involvement in education. Findings from this research include opportunities provided by translanguaging, the necessity of overcoming internalized biases, the harm of English-only policies, the importance of interpreters in schools, and the importance of translated documents/communications to strengthen family involvement.

Keywords: Translation, Interpretation, Translanguaging, Bilingualism, Monolingualism

Introduction

In this paper, I will review literature on translanguaging, interpreting, and translating in an educational context. I chose this topic because of my career in a large midwestern urban school district. I am the school's parent liaison, and it is my goal to involve the parents and families of students in their education and in the school community.

I am the only staff member in the school who speaks Spanish. The secretary calls me to the front of the office several times a day when a Spanish speaker is present or on the phone. Normally, it is a simple question or message, such as the student is ill and will not be in class that day. My coworkers are unable to communicate with Spanish speakers, and sometimes I think they do not want to learn how. However, their unwillingness

to learn is likely rooted in a lack of time and energy to dedicate to language learning.

How do these families feel at school? They can only communicate in their home language with one person in the entire building. When a teacher needs to communicate with a Spanish-speaking parent, they ask me to translate a document or letter, or they ask me to call a parent. One could argue that the language barrier reduces communication with these families, whether the communication is negative or positive.

In my research, I am going to explore the state of translanguaging and interpreting in schools. Translanguaging is defined as "using the two languages strategically to maximize communication to express a message" (Prada, 2019). While communication with families is very important in education, communication with students is important as well. I will explore methods of translanguaging in the classroom and in communi-

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nication with families. The majority of examples are based on native Spanish speakers who are learning English as a new language.

It is clear that transformative changes are necessary in the school system for English Language Learners (ELL). Some teachers use English-only policies that are destructive to the child's self-worth. These policies make the child feel unvalued and less-than, which is detrimental to the teacher-student relationship and will result in poor educational outcomes. Educators must welcome and celebrate different languages and cultures rather than pushing them aside. While some English as a New Language teachers use English-only policies because they themselves only speak English, these policies are incredibly alienating. We must allow our students to learn by translanguaging and providing scaffolding to build their confidence in English, which will result in the student feeling welcomed and valued.

Transformative teaching methods for English Language Learners include multilingual books, using the native language in writing, visual displays, notes in the native language, and bilingual dictionaries. These practices break away from the status quo of enforcing English-only policies. These practices will result in better educational outcomes, providing more equity between native English speakers and native speakers of other languages. The practices are easily applied to real-life educational settings.

Native Spanish Speakers and Translanguaging

Translanguaging means using the two languages strategically to maximize communication to express a message, meaning the two languages are an integrated system instead of two separate languages, as defined by Dr. Josh Prada in his article "Exploring the role of Translanguaging in Linguistic Ideological and Attitudinal Reconfigurations in the Spanish Classroom for Heritage Speakers." Another definition of translanguaging is "the multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (Garcia, 2009). The first language can be utilized to its full potential to adopt a fluid instead of a fixed notion of language (Kabir, 2019). The speaker uses characteristics of the two languages for the highest communication potential. This is also where we experience loan words between languages, such as *siesta* and *paella*.

English learners use translanguaging as a bridge between English and their native language. Translanguaging builds confidence when the speaker can use simple words and phrases in the new language; the

speaker can build the foundation of the new language when using the native language if they do not know the phrases or words in the new language (Prada, 2018). The practices of translanguaging in pedagogy will be discussed in this paper later on.

People also use translanguaging when a concept exists in one language and does not exist in the other. For example, there is an American woman who has visited Spain and wanted to explain characteristics of Spanish culture. She would not say that "My classmate is having a big party for her 15th birthday", she would say "My classmate is having a quinceanera." On the contrary, people use translanguaging to explain concepts in English as well. A girl in high school wouldn't say that "The boy asked me to the big dance for the 12th graders"; she would say "A boy asked me to the prom".

It is important to consider many perspectives when a native Spanish speaker is translanguaging. One must consider the population of Spanish speakers in the community. Does the speaker live in Miami, which has a majority Hispanic population, or in a small, white town in Ohio? Also, it is important to consider the context (casual or formal) and life experiences, such as level of education or socioeconomic status, as the social context and socioeconomic status may change the vernacular used in the exchange. Native speakers use translanguaging to give more meaning to interactions with language flexibility. Translanguaging allows the speaker to offer, obtain, process, and understand information.

The definition of translanguaging introduces the concepts of heteroglossia and diglossia "Heteroglossia means using the two languages in a flexible way; the barriers of which words and phrases are from one language, and which are from the other language do not exist" (Prada, 2018). Heteroglossia also transcends barriers of geography. The use of each language has no restrictions because the two languages are so integrated.

Diglossia means that the two languages are separate and are not used together (Prada, 2018). They are separate in the mind, and they are not integrated. Sadly, the idea of diglossia introduces a hierarchy of language. In the United States, many people believe that English is the superior language and Spanish is inferior. This belief stems from racism, white supremacy, and xenophobia. Some people think that native Spanish - the method that people speak casually, such as with family - is inferior because it is not in line with the standard. But, it is important to remember that this idea originates from raciolinguistics - people want them to "sound white"



when they speak English. While Spanish as the heritage language works perfectly in most situations, it is difficult for its speakers to enter the academic spheres. People who translanguage can learn to speak and write more “academically” to enter these academic spheres; in this case, translanguaging is a skill.

Translanguaging has a great influence on the language classroom. When the language is separate and an abstract entity, translanguaging cannot happen. The second language needs to be integrated into the classroom. For the sake of simplicity, I will discuss translanguaging in pedagogy in the context of native Spanish speakers learning English. The first point to consider is that the teacher needs to differentiate instruction for small groups or individual students; the “one size fits all” strategy is not effective in the English language classroom. It is important to ensure that students have prior knowledge and context to do class work. For example, a teacher at a higher-income magnet school could assign students to do research and write about college and career prospects that interest them. A staff member or classmate could explain that students at this particular school are expected to go to college, so they should research a career path that requires a college degree. Many authors encourage the idea of flexible language use in the classroom to ensure that students feel comfortable in class and with their peers. The use of flexible language can allow students to connect with the material in a more personal way. Also, translanguaging can strengthen relationships between classmates because they have the native language in common, and with language comes life experiences and culture. It is recommended to pair students who know more English with students who speak less English, and this practice is common in many academic contexts and subjects. One other point to consider is if local language factors, such as accents and vocabulary, should be used in the classroom. Some argue that local vernaculars are not up to standard; however, many academics argue against the idea of a language standard as it creates an unfair deficit framework (Harris & Schroeder, 2013). Awareness of regional accents and vocabulary increases language fluency.

In conclusion, it is important to have a definition of translanguaging and how to give context to this phenomenon. The author gives information on translanguaging in the context of pedagogy in the language classroom. We are reminded that raciolinguistics are present and create a hierarchy between the two languages, and it is important to view this phenomenon

without judgment and internalized racism (Prada, 2018). Translanguaging is a great method to build a bridge between the native language and the second language.

Multilingual Translanguaging in Different Social Contexts

Speakers use translanguaging differently in each social context. My research on this phenomenon is based on a study of a trilingual couple from China, as outlined in *Translanguaging and translation: The construction of social difference across city spaces*. (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). The husband is from China and the wife is from Malaysia, and they usually speak Mandarin. They speak Cantonese and English as well. The couple met when working together at a restaurant, and now they have three children. The couple owns a meat business in Birmingham, which is a “superdiverse” city. The couple uses translanguaging and translation in different areas in the city. This is a strategic use of the three languages that depends on the context and the participants in the interaction (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu). The authors analyze three recordings - a conversation at their business, a social conversation, and a conversation at home between husband and wife.

In this study, we see that interpreters are “social agents” who reflect and transfer information (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). This couple can find common ground with whom they would have not otherwise communicated. More people can connect with translanguaging because they can use their entire repertoire of communication (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). Speakers of different walks of life, ethnicities, genders, and more can connect when they translanguage. Translanguaging fills in the gaps in each language to communicate the entire message - all three languages are integrated into one large language repertoire for successful interaction (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018).

The methodology of this study consists of recordings at work (the meat stand), among friends, and at home. The authors explain the wife’s parents were visiting from Malaysia, and the couple spoke Cantonese with the parents. When the couple was at work, they usually spoke Mandarin, and they usually spoke Cantonese, Mandarin, or English to communicate with customers (Blackledge, Creese, & Hu, 2018).

The first recording was at the meat stand in town square. The husband and another cashier were at the booth, and the recording is an interaction between the



husband, the other cashier, and the customer. In the context of the stall or a store, people cross social lines to make the transaction. The two men made a judgment to decide which language to use, or would test all three languages to see which language succeeds in conversation. The customer asked the husband to translate the question to the other cashier, but the cashier understood the dialect of Chinese that the customer spoke. In the recording, the husband was more concerned about expressing the main idea of the message rather than the details (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu).

In the next recording, we listen to a conversation between the husband, the wife, and the other cashier. The conversation is about a birthday celebration for a friend. The other cashier expresses that while he wants to go to the party, he does not want to spend money on beers and a taxi. The group discusses the cultural differences between England and China with respect to the etiquette of celebrations. In this conversation, the other teller speaks in English. The wife speaks to the husband in Mandarin a few times to confirm that she understands English, which shows that she thinks the husband understands more English than she does. The husband uses colloquial phrases, and the couple uses English and Mandarin as an integrated system (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018).

The final recording takes place in the home. During the study, the wife's parents were visiting, and the couple spoke in Cantonese with the parents. The parents do not participate in this conversation, but are present during the interaction. The couple discuss the business and that they think some workers are lazy. The couple uses offensive words about white workers. While the words are racist, the couple does not feel bad about using these words because there are no white people in the vicinity. The couple speaks informally and they use sarcasm. There are no social lines in the house because the husband and wife are of the same social class as the in-laws, and they do not need to cross these lines (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018).

It is also important to consider how young people use translanguaging, as seen in "Translanguaging as a Boundary-Crossing Mechanism: A Turkish-American Youngster and her Linguistic Negotiation of Three Discursive Spaces" (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). This study reviews a young girl around age six and her experiences in translanguaging at home, her Turkish-language heritage school, and her mainstream school. The authors state that her family valued the girl's multilingualism and wanted to preserve her knowledge of the Turkish

language, so they spoke Turkish at home and sent her to a Turkish heritage school on Sunday afternoons. The child was born in Hong Kong and had Hong Kong citizenship, so they also valued her knowledge of Cantonese. Her mainstream school was fairly diverse, but the teacher had little knowledge of the Turkish language and culture, based on a teacher interview. The teachers at the heritage school spoke both English and Turkish (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020).

One of the findings the authors found was the difference in language use by the adults in her life. Her parents only used Turkish at home, aside from using English to help the girl with homework (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Her teacher at school used English most of the time, aside from occasional Spanish with some Spanish-speaking students (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The teachers at the heritage school spoke both English and Turkish in order to facilitate understanding between students of varying language proficiencies (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Based on these findings, we can conclude that her teachers at the Turkish heritage school were using translanguaging to allow for a broader repertoire of communication.

Another finding from the study was the difference in language use by her peers in these three different places- home, the heritage school, and her mainstream school. Her peers at home were the children of family friends who also spoke Turkish, so these interactions were almost entirely in Turkish (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Her peers at her mainstream school spoke almost entirely English, aside from occasional Spanish conversations with Spanish-speaking peers. In an interview, the girl noted two experiences of speaking Turkish at school- once when she met another Turkish-speaking student, and once when she was teaching a peer a few words in Turkish (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). Her peers used translanguaging frequently at the heritage school in order to accurately convey messages between students of varying language proficiencies (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The teachers at the heritage school supported translanguaging so they could embrace both parts of their identity and widen their community (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020).

Another finding to consider is the boundaries between these three locations. The girl could easily transition between home and the heritage school because Turkish could be spoken at both places, but the transition from home to her mainstream school was incredibly difficult (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The transition from the heritage school to the mainstream school was



not as difficult because English was spoken in both places, but the girl was able to translanguage at the heritage school, which was not an option at her mainstream school (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020).

In conclusion, the couple uses translanguaging as a very important resource in the business and with the family (Blackledge, Creese, & Hu, 2018) and in the young Turkish girl's experience in navigating home, her mainstream school, and her heritage school (de Jong & Yilmaz, 2020). The husband and the other cashier use translanguaging with customers at the meat stand, and they use translanguaging in social situations as well. They decide which language to use strategically depending on the context, and they can mix the three languages to get the message across, along with using the same strategy with the wife's parents (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu, 2018). The young Turkish girl decides which language to use with different people in her life (parents vs. teachers, peers at the heritage school vs. peers at her mainstream school, etc.). This study shows that people communicate more effectively when they use their entire repertoire to communicate with different people in different situations strategically.

Latinx Childrens' Use of Translanguaging

Many Latinx students have an internal conflict between English and Spanish, and have compartmentalized English for use during the school day and Spanish for use at home (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). The authors of *Latinx Children's Push and Pull of Spanish Literacy and Translanguaging* explain that schools have "English-only" policies because state tests are only in English, and funding for schools depends on state test scores. The pedagogy only focuses on phonics and grammar, which does not allow analysis, synthesis, and higher order thinking (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018).

Unfortunately, these children often do not learn to read and write in Spanish, and sometimes they lose their Spanish. When students lose their Spanish, they lose a rich culture and family connections. Sadly, schools see Spanish as a problem rather than a magnificent resource. Many schools force Latinx students to take very basic classes (possibly because students do not earn high scores on state tests, because the test is in English), and students are not prepared for higher education (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). Another hypothesis is that schools see Spanish as a language of the lower social class, and they think that Spanish speakers are not intelligent, so they have a deficit.

Many of these students do not feel comfortable in class and rarely participate (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018).

We can investigate Latinx childrens' use of translanguaging by reading a study that takes place in a private tutoring program during May and June 2017, as outlined in *Latinx Children's Push and Pull of Spanish Literacy and Translanguaging* (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). The students in this program were there because they were struggling in school, particularly in reading and writing. Fifteen student teachers worked with 19 children for an hour and a half in the afternoons, and then the college students had a literacy class in the evenings. College students would help children write in English, in Spanish, and in translanguaging. All of the students were in grades kindergarten through eight, and did not learn Spanish literacy in school.

The data from the study was based on interviews with the children. The study authors would ask questions about experiences with the tutoring program and experiences with Spanish at school. The students liked the opportunity to write in Spanish because they never had the opportunity to write in Spanish at school (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). In the interviews, many children talked about state tests, and they were not permitted to answer the questions in Spanish (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). Some children said that writing in Spanish was too difficult and they could not do it, because they had not had formal instruction to write in Spanish (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018).

Some children were confused by translanguaging because of "bracketing" - the separation between English and Spanish (Bussert-Webb, Masso, & Lewis, 2018). The children understood that Spanish was at home, and English was at school. However, the students did not realize that they had been translanguaging for a lifetime with their families and in the community. For example, many of the children had been translating for their parents for many years. One student felt that translanguaging was like "Spanglish" with a pouting face - my thought is that she has an internalized dislike of Spanish, which is based on racism and the hierarchy between English and Spanish. However, the faculty at the tutoring center worked very hard to create positive associations with Spanish and translanguaging. For example, the center had a Mother's Day card making activity in May, and the messages within the cards were in Spanish. The children enjoyed this activity because their language and culture were respected and cele-



brated. College students switched between English and Spanish to show that the two languages are important. The center acted as a “third place” between home and school, a place to experience and learn.

In conclusion, the study shows that bilingual children have internalized racism because schools only value English. Schools only value English because state tests are often only in English, and school funding is based on state test scores. If there were not any government pressure and testing, schools could teach Spanish literacy to support English literacy. Perhaps states like Texas and California need to consider different policies to preserve Spanish instead of its erasure.

Translanguaging in Practice and Its Shifts in Ideologies

Unfortunately, there are some educators who do not allow native language in the classroom. We learn more about the benefits of linguistic diversity in the classroom from a study on eight schools that choose to introduce the project “City University New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals” [CUNYSIEB] (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). The CUNYSIEB faculty introduced the concept of translanguaging to the faculty of the eight schools during professional development meetings, and asked them to allow students to use the entire linguistic repertoire in class flexibly and strategically within translanguaging pedagogy. This request caused a change of mind and changed monolingual practices in schools (Menken & Sanchez, 2019).

To give context, some teachers spoke Spanish, but some native languages of the students were not spoken by the teachers. The teachers slowly introduced new practices of translanguaging pedagogy. For example, a practice of translanguaging in the classroom is to put students in pairs and small groups. Translanguaging offered opportunities for scaffolding in partner/small group conversations. The multilingual practices included multilingual books, using the native language in writing, visual displays, notes in the native language, and bilingual dictionaries.

The schools had many changes of ideology about the language. Teachers no longer acted like the “English police,” which developed a schoolwide belief in translanguaging. The schools no longer see the native language as a deficit, but as an advantage (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). Translanguaging is a very useful resource even when the teacher does not speak the native language of the student.

The study shows that it is important to see the

bilingual student holistically. In the past, educators in the school district did not consider the native language’s grammar and sentence structure (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). With translanguaging, teachers can view the language, culture, and history of students more favorably and with context. According to the study, translanguaging eliminates language hierarchies, because languages are woven together and are not separated. The students participated more in class and felt like a part of the school community. The students understood the class topics more thoroughly and had more control over their learning.

As a result of this project (CUNYSIEB), the districts enacted new education policies. Five of the eight schools created bilingual programs, and three schools created transitional bilingual programs. Some schools created classes that are entirely in Spanish. The study authors pointed out that developing the native language supports the development of English. One problem with bilingual education is that it is difficult to staff bilingual teachers. Another problem with bilingual education is that it can separate the two languages, but the study schools are using translanguaging to prevent the separation (Menken & Sanchez, 2019).

In my research, I found it important to include findings from “(Re)imagining the Future of Translanguaging in Pedagogies in TESOL Through Teacher-Researcher Collaboration” from Shepard-Carey and Tian, 2020. This article highlights teacher and researcher collaboration to mobilize and sustain translanguaging pedagogies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, or TESOL. The two researchers paired up with a local English instructor to build a collaborative partnership to create effective translanguaging strategies to ensure higher educational outcomes.

Researcher Tian built a partnership with a former classmate who taught an intensive English course at a university (pseudonym Ms. Davidson). When outlining their goals, Ms. Davidson explained that translanguaging had been a “hidden” practice in her classroom via online bilingual dictionaries and students resorting to their native language in small group discussions (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Ms. Davidson wanted to learn ways to leverage those multilingual resources in her teaching (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Tian and Davidson created translanguaging activities in their classroom based on course goals and learner backgrounds, “such as comparing and contrasting semantic and cultural use of language in context (e.g., idioms and language in mass media) and culturally relevant figures’



role play” (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). One challenge they faced was student resistance to use the native language due to the hidden curriculum of immersion being the only way to learn a language, so Tian and Davidson held open discussions about native languages and their relation to English (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Tian and Davidson found that translanguaging pedagogies significantly increased learner comprehension, metalinguistic awareness, and comfort level with using English (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020).

Researcher Shepard-Carey worked with her former co-teacher, pseudonym Ms. Hassan. While Shepard-Carey had a stronger background in pedagogy, Ms. Hassan identified as an immigrant and spoke Somali, the native language of many of her students; her background provided knowledge and experience that was beneficial to the classroom (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). They both had to confront some internalized biases; both teachers had been taught to use English-only policies in the classroom, but their collaboration allowed for more opportunities for students to use translanguaging in the classroom (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). For example, the co-teachers used a multilingual morning meeting routine that lasted all year (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020). Since the students were translanguaging, they were able to create deeper connections between their native language and English for better understanding (Shepard-Carey & Tian, 2020).

In conclusion, the CUNYSIEB project created a more positive view of bilingual students and their cultures and histories. This project led to more researchers and educators to use translanguaging in the classroom, as seen in Shepard-Carey and Tian’s work. The project went beyond pedagogy practices and created a change in ideology. It is important to remember that teachers need to believe in translanguaging to teach with these practices, and it is a reminder that English is no better than any other language (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). Some students may meet translanguaging with resistance, but with open communication and encouragement, students can benefit greatly from translanguaging. Small changes can create a change in ideology, and it can make a big change in the school and community.

The Importance of Interpreters in Schools

We must also consider the importance of interpreters in schools for families who speak languages other than English. “Bridging the Latino Achievement Gap: The Importance of Interpreters In Schools” by Rachel R. Williams of University of Kentucky offers perspective

based on real experiences in public schools. The author begins with the notion that schools generally fail to understand and accommodate languages and cultures other than English and American. Sometimes there are conflicts between students and adults in school due to a lack of understanding of their culture and language (Williams, 2016). But, there is a large communication barrier between the families that only speak Spanish and the schools that only communicate in English (Williams, 2016). Studies show that there is a correlation between family involvement in education and student success.

What are the advantages of family participation in education? According to the author, students are much more successful when their families are involved in the school versus not being involved in the school. The first advantage is that students are more engaged in the classroom. The second advantage is that students are more motivated. The third advantage is that students have higher levels of control and competence, and more effective self-control and goal orientation. All of these advantages lead to higher outcomes of student success (Williams, 2016).

Why are these students more successful? The author writes that students feel more comfortable in school. These students are often “high-achieving” due to intellect or “high-achieving” because they have help and support in education. These students often take advanced classes and feel happy and confident (Williams, 2016).

Parents who are Spanish speakers have many disadvantages in education, primarily in regards to communication. It is difficult for these parents to help with homework because they do not understand directions and content. It is important to consider that some parents have not had much education, and many did not graduate from high school. The largest barrier is that parents cannot communicate with school personnel. Children are often “language brokers”, or interpreters for their parents (Rossato, 2010). These situations when the child needs to interpret give children a lot of stress; also, there is a limit to the complexity and potential of the communication because the child does not understand the subject, or the vocabulary is too advanced (Rossato, 2010). When children are interpreting for parents, it is not possible to determine the accuracy of communication, which could lead to misunderstandings.

Williams (2016) coordinated a study on parent and family involvement in education. A bilingual and Latino



interviewer asked the children about their attitude about education, such as “How do you feel about math?” and “What subjects do you like?” The interviewer asked parents about their experiences and attitudes about school. 58% of parents said they were confident in their ability to communicate with their child’s teacher, and 42% said they were not confident in communicating with their child’s teacher. 78% of the 42% said they had access to an interpreter, and 22% did not have access to an interpreter.

Another aspect of this study was about conversations between school staff and parents. The researcher concluded that it is very necessary to have an interpreter during these conversations to maximize communication. The presence of an interpreter increases the pace of communication, the level of communication, and the levels of trust between the two parties. It is imperative that the interpreter and staff work together to maximize communication with parents.

Communication flow between parents and school staff has a positive correlation with monitoring student achievement, such as looking at grades in PowerSchool (Williams, 2016). Parents with adequate communication can help with homework and support students when they need it. There is more frequent contact between parents and the school, and these conversations are of a higher caliber. However, communication is not a factor in how much the family values education. All families want their students to be successful academically, but sometimes they are unsure of how to help. It is very difficult to help with homework and communicate with the school when they do not speak the same language and there is no interpreter.

It is unlikely that a child can understand complicated documents like these, especially in their second language. Documents need to be in Spanish, or the office needs to provide an interpreter. It is not the child’s responsibility to translate documents or for other adults. The content of such documents is often too complicated for the child to understand. Sometimes the subject matter is not appropriate, such as details of a divorce or medical forms regarding reproductive health.

In conclusion, all families want to support their children, and they want children to be successful in their education. But, it is very difficult to help the child with homework when the parent does not speak the same language. It is important that interpreters work together with school staff to ensure that parents who are Spanish speakers have the same quality of service and communication as parents who are English

speakers. Families and schools are a team, and the goal is the child’s success.

Translations in School Communication

It is also imperative to discuss the responsibility of schools to communicate with all families. Stephanie Fordice, former communications coordinator for Cook County Schools in Illinois, offers strategies to ensure effective communications for all families. Fordice’s article “At the Corner of Diversity and Communication” gives many suggestions for schools and school districts. The first suggestion is to ensure that the translations are accurate and readily available and it is also recommended to have an interpreter at all school events so all families can communicate and feel comfortable (Fordice, 2014). All schools and the district office need an interpreter in the building to answer questions in a timely manner, and all documents and publications (newsletters, calendars, etc.) need a translation; of course, these translations need to go to the correct students. One simple strategy is to make bilingual copies with English on one side and the second language on the other side. The author compares the translations to differentiated instruction because all families need different supports. It is important to consider the format of the documents as well, as some languages read right to left instead of left to right (Fordice, 2014).

It is also important to ensure that these documents and publications are on paper and online, since some families do not have the technology or access to the Internet (Fordice, 2014). When furthering my research in school communication, I came across the article “The Roles of the Online Environment in School-Family Communication” by Otilia Clipa, faculty member of Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava. In Clipa’s findings, we discover that 80% of parents feel that online communication would strengthen the relationship between the school and the family, along with 76% of teachers. If the school decides to have information on the website or social media, the platform needs to have a function that translates the content into other languages, and it is important that the translation is correct (Fordice, 2014). Some schools and districts post videos, so they need captions available in the needed language (Fordice, 2014). In personal experience, many schools use Blackboard Connect, a service that broadcasts phone messages, text messages, and emails to families. These communications are fairly easy to translate into the needed language.



Another important idea is to have a school liaison who is bilingual so the parents and families can communicate with at least one staff member at the school (Fordice, 2014). The liaison focuses on communication with families and community partners. The liaison considers all factors that prevent parent and family involvement, such as transportation and language barriers. The author's research was based on a school in Chicago that has two family liaisons (one bilingual) because family involvement has a positive correlation with student success. It is also important that these liaisons and other school staff members are competent in internet and social media usage (Clipa, 2019).

Conclusion

Students learning English as a new language could have more success if school staff members change their ideologies and confront their internalized biases. Translanguaging allows students to access their entire repertoire of communication to fully communicate a message, along with allowing students to scaffold as they build confidence in English. It is imperative to celebrate progress instead of showing disappointment when a child's attempt in English is not quite correct; many children would shut down and feel very embarrassed in that instance. When teachers enforce "English-only" policies, this destroys the student-teacher relationship, which is detrimental to student success. Students need to know they are safe and valued at school for authentic learning to take place and have positive educational outcomes. Staff members could show a genuine interest in the child's culture and learn more by speaking with the child and doing research.

In order to improve communication with families, one of the simplest strategies is to print school documents in English on one side and Spanish on the other. That way, it is ensured that families who need the document in Spanish will have it. Another strategy is to hire an interpreter whose sole duty is to communicate with families during meetings or other school events. The interpreter could also make phone calls and write correspondence in the needed language to improve communication and remove any barriers.

It is imperative to value diversity instead of viewing it as a burden. As educators, we are doing ourselves a disservice when we do not value a child's background and language. It is our job to ensure each child has what they need to be successful, and a child whose first language is not English should have the same opportunities as a child who is a native English speaker. These barriers need to be removed to ensure equity in school and beyond.



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Transformative Syllabus Design: Maximizing learning outcomes in higher education

Michael T. Ndemanu

Abstract

This paper discusses the contours of developing a 21st century course syllabus that empowers students in the learning process to become critical thinkers, problem-solvers, innovators, and collaborators. The author draws from transformative learning theory to provide detailed information on the characteristics of a syllabus, its universal components, interpreting course code, uses of a syllabus, accessibility, and backward design. He also draws from Bloom's taxonomy to offer a pragmatic guide to syllabus creation with concrete examples on how instructors can employ a backward design approach for syllabus development to effectively create a syllabus of a course they have never taught before. The author concludes by reiterating that the overarching emphasis of teaching with a syllabus is to promote higher-order thinking and deeper learning in higher education because a syllabus that promotes such practices and knowledge transfer maximizes learning outcomes.

Keywords: Syllabus, Learner-centered, Learning outcomes, 21st Century SKills, Higher education

Introduction

Wilhelm von Humboldt, a German philosopher, is the founder of today's modern university system that transformed universities from training-oriented professional institutions couched in transmissive pedagogy to the present-day higher education institutions that are committed to the discovery of, pursuit of, search for, knowledge (Mueller, 1991). The goal of using a syllabus to teach college courses is to ensure that modern higher education institutions meet the goals for which they were founded. This paper is aimed at strengthening professional development skills of higher education instructors in syllabus development.

It is a truism that higher education in any country is a citadel of knowledge production and consumption. While one would expect a fair balance between research and teaching in a university, many organizations concerned with the quality of programs only tend to use research output as a yardstick of an institutional

value, thereby undermining teaching (OECD) which is one of the most crucial aspects of college education. This may explain why there is no teacher preparation program for university instructors as it is the case for K-12 teachers. Although professors are content experts in their various fields, most of them did not take formal coursework on pedagogy. Nonetheless, many would claim that they master college teaching and do not need professional development in pedagogy on grounds of their extended apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). Apprenticeship of observation is predicated on the notion that by the time a student has completed their K-12 education, they had amassed more than 13000 hours of teaching observations as they observe their own teachers and professors teach them. Whether a professor has received formal preparation in college teaching or not, there is a general consensus that they should all know how to conceptualize and develop a syllabus for each of the courses that they teach so as to improve the quality of college education. This essay offers a pragmatic guide to syllabus development

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using transformative education theoretical framework. A syllabus can be defined as a course roadmap that provides the various makeups of a course such that prospective and current students in the course are abreast with the course objectives and expectations. As Parkes et al. (2002) posit, a syllabus serves as a contract between the instructor and the students given that it contains vital information regarding course description, course readings, assignments and their deadlines, attendance policy, roles and duties of students as well as the responsibilities of instructors. While research on syllabus is very limited, most of it has focused on its purpose and its required components. Calhoon et al. (2008) went outside the norm to study how students use syllabi. They contended that students access syllabi on a regular basis when the syllabi contain information about assignments, due dates, and rubrics.

It is worth noting that syllabus embodies a lot of intricacies owing to educators' varying philosophical orientations and dispositions. Paradoxically, such orientations are not as diametrically different among educators in developing countries owing to the fact that they all studied through a very traditional and transmission-oriented pedagogy. Thus, a plurality of educators still strongly believes in the banking concept (Freire, 2000) in which the instructor is the sole owner of knowledge and the reading material and only share them with students during lectures. Such an entrenched belief in the sole proprietorship of knowledge in a specific domain influences instructors' choice of tone, content, delivery methods, expectations, objectives, instructional activities, and course policy during the syllabus design process. While it is unheard of in higher education in the United States that college professors could teach a course without a predesigned syllabus, it is still a ubiquitous practice in some countries around the world. Many students are still graduating from college without ever having had any exposure to the syllabi of the courses they took. It was within this backdrop that the author of this essay decided to write an article on strategies of developing a learner-centered course syllabus so that it could benefit all the faculty members who are interested in maximizing their students' learning outcomes through active learning, but who do not know how to go about it. In the subsequent sections of this essay, a conceptual framework will be discussed, followed by characteristics of a syllabus, procedure of syllabus design, and conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

For this article, a transformative learning theory is used to discuss the merits of designing a learner-centered syllabus. Transformative learning theory, coined by Mezirow et al. (2000) in the 1970s, was initially used in the field of adult education before becoming mainstreamed in the education field as a whole. It is a relatively new terminology that was first used to describe a new teaching and learning process that involves meaning making out of new information to ensure that knowledge is transferred and applied in real-life contexts beyond the classroom. It encompasses reviewing, manipulating, and interpreting current and past experiences to make meaning. It also embodies critical thinking and critical literacy- Learning to question. Learning to deconstruct and reconstruct concepts, theories, ideologies, and worldviews. In other words, learning is preceded by disorienting dilemmas because a previous experience has been disrupted. Thus, transformative education could engender psychological trauma since it problematizes a perennial practice that has been normalized over the years (Todd, 2003). Education is supposed to lead to the transformation of the learner and consequently the society. Many teachers in developed countries already employ transformative education theory in designing and teaching their courses given that transformative education cultivates critical thinking skills in learners. It also places strong emphases on creativity and problem-solving skills which are essential skills for the 21st century problems.

The contemporary notion of transformative education transcends the adult education field into broader view of education as an art of transforming learners and not just informing them. As Yacek (2019) argued, transformative education requires psychological restructuring for effective learning to take place because it requires an in-depth critical reflection about previously held beliefs to determine whether those previously held ideas should be upheld or discarded. It requires perspicacious determination of what to reject and what to substitute previous knowledge with. Thus, syllabi should be designed in such a way that educational goals will be formed around addressing the fundamental question of educating more for transformation and minimally for information (Rosebrough et al., 2011). Not all education acquired is considered transformative. For Yacek (2019), it is only transformative when an educational experience is identified as an extraordinary monumental change in a learner's personal development, shattering previous beliefs and worldviews while



ushering it fresher perspective on prior concepts. The word transformative ought not to be viewed as a buzzword given that almost every learner at all ages experiences some sort of transformative experience in formal and informal contexts. There are Christians who become atheists and vice versa. There are homophobes and transphobes who become pro-LGBTQ. There are climate change deniers who become major advocates of environmental education. It is vital to harness the facts that contributed to such transformation so that educators can draw from those narratives to enhance transformative pedagogies. In transformative education, there is a major shift in students' habits of thought and action (English, 2014).

It does not, therefore, suffice to create a syllabus for a creation's sake. It has to be purposefully transformative, learner-centered, and laser-focused on building students' 21st century competency skills. Incorporating multifaceted pedagogies ensures that learners are metacognitively reached so that they can become proficient in addressing 21st century problems.

Characteristics of a Syllabus

The overall tone of a syllabus is undergirded by the university's mission and vision statements as well as the teaching philosophy of the course instructor. Where there is no mission statement foregrounding the kind of education that the university values, there is likely going to be less uniformity in the curricular and pedagogic approaches across syllabi. Thus, it is of utmost importance to review and incorporate the mission and/or vision statements of the university and departmental college into the syllabus because they serve as overarching guiding tone and direction in the development of the curriculum as well as the instruction. Here are a few examples of university mission and vision statements and how they can shape the development of syllabi in these institutions:

Mission statement of the University of Michigan (UM)

"The mission of the University of Michigan is to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future" (umich.edu).

It is evident from this mission statement that UM values critical thinking skills, leadership skills, civic education, knowledge creation and knowledge application. It is up

to the instructors to infuse these values in their syllabi.

Mission statement of the Ball State University (BSU)

"We engage students in educational, research, and creative endeavors that empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives enriched by lifelong learning and service, while we enhance the economic, environmental, and social vitality of our community, our state, and our world" (bsu.edu).

BSU's mission statement iterates research, creativity, preparing students for fulfilling careers, social, environmental, and economic sustainability. This mission statement gives a bigger picture of the university's overarching goal that instructors in that institution use or ought to use as a starting point when designing a syllabus.

Vision Statement of Indiana University (IU)

"Our mission is to provide broad access to undergraduate and graduate education for students throughout Indiana, the United States, and the world, as well as outstanding academic and cultural programs and student services.

We seek to create dynamic partnerships with our communities in economic, social, and cultural development and to offer leadership in creative solutions for 21st-century problems, and we strive to achieve full diversity and maintain friendly, collegial, and humane environments, with a strong commitment to academic freedom.

To achieve our vision as one of the great research universities of the 21st century, we will:

- Provide an excellent, relevant, and responsive education across a wide range of disciplines in baccalaureate, graduate, and professional education, to students from all backgrounds
- Pursue excellent world-class research, scholarship, and creative activity
- Engage in the economic, social, civic, and cultural development of Indiana, the nation, and the world by building on the base of excellence in research and education" (iub.edu).

IU has a comprehensive vision statement that covers almost all the various mission iterations of UM and BSU. Some of the major highlights of its vision statement include: access to higher education, research, leadership skills in creativity, academic freedom, inclusion, diversity, social, economic, and civic vitality of the community.



Each university is established to address the societal needs and the labor shortage of the state or region in which it is located. National and international needs are often secondary at the creation of the institution, but could subsequently occupy frontline positions in the institution's curriculum. A well-crafted syllabus in MU, BSU, and IU will explicitly and implicitly address most of the major themes of the university's mission statement. The syllabi may foreground specific content knowledge, ways of knowing, communication, research, experiential learning, environmental sustainability, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving skills, and community service. A university's mission/vision statement sets the tone of an educational culture on the entire campus. Such a tone is then replicated in the various syllabi throughout the campus. A course syllabus needs to adhere to institutional framework in order to fulfil the objectives of that institution. Most of the current university's missions are designed to cultivate in students the 21st century competency skills.

Interpreting Course Code

Another notable and indispensable characteristic of a syllabus is the course code. Course codes are identity markers that differentiate one course from another in terms of discipline and level of study. On designing a syllabus, instructors need to be aware of the meanings of the subject code and the catalog number in order to provide content and assessments that are appropriate for students' developmental and academic readiness. Undergraduate courses typically have the subject code and the catalog number ranging from 100 to 499. For example, the course PSYC 101 has PSYC as the subject code that represents the Psychology discipline while the catalog number, 101, shows the level of study. The first digit indicates specific level of study while the rest of the digits are defined by the different levels of course strength. Therefore, a course that starts with 1 as in PSYC 101 shows that it is a foundational course while level 2 courses start with 2 such as in PSYC 201, indicating that it is an expansive foundational course. Levels 3 and 4 courses typically require prerequisites because they require more advanced thinking skills and demonstration of in-depth knowledge.

Universal Components of a Syllabus

Although there is seldom a standardized syllabus format, there are, however, some major characteristics of a learner-centered syllabus. The characteristics which can be grouped into four broad categories

include: contact information, institutional statements, objective information, and course policies.

Category One: Contact information

In this category, the first page of the syllabus starts with a boldly marked name of the institution, followed by the course title (e.g., XXX 100), course sections, semester in which the course is offered, meeting dates and time, room number, instructor's name, e-mail address, phone number of the instructor, office address, and office hours. If there is a graduate assistant assigned to the instructor, their name and e-mail address should also be included. The information on this category should not cover more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a standard A4 size page. The contact information is particularly helpful to first-generation college students because provides them information about the location of their classes and ways to contact their professors at any given moment. This helps reduce stress and anxiety that students tend to experience in their first year in college.

Category Two: Institutional statements

At the end of contact information on an A4 size page, there are mandatory institutional statements that are cut and pasted into the syllabus. The content encompasses university's mission statement, institutional statements about diversity and inclusion, disability services, writing center, and technology help desk. Some institutions also include statements forewarning students against plagiarism, tobacco use and alcoholism on campus. All these statements are invaluable to the entire student body because they contain policies that reiterate institutional expectations and provide information about the various services that are offered by the university to accommodate students' needs in the areas of technology, disabilities, library services, learning, and writing centers. Universities want these statements to be included in all syllabi to ensure a wider dissemination and digestion of their message. Not all institutions have all the statements. Instructors are not advised to borrow and use statements from another university. They should design their syllabi with the institutional information that has been made available to them by the hierarchy. In many universities in the United States, professors receive emails weeks before the beginning of each semester on institutional statements that must be part of the syllabus.



Category Three: Objective Information

Objective information encompasses narrative about the course, the purpose and the rationale of the course, prerequisites and/or co-requisites courses that must be taken before or along the current course, course objectives or competencies, course materials and texts, assignments, final exam or final project, rubric, grade criteria, course calendar, and supplemental reading sources. Under objective information, the instructors explain clearly what the course is all about, why it is important for the students, why it is necessary for their chosen program, and why they should sign up for the course. One of the best ways to retain students' interests in the course from the outset is to give them a palpable rationale as to why the course is being offered, stating persuasively how it would fulfil their program requirements and how it would contribute to their career growth and/or to the better of the society. If there is a prerequisite course, it has to be stated in the syllabus as a prerequisite requirement. Sometimes, some courses are taken alongside one other course. If it is the case with the course that is being designed, the co-requisite should be stated in the front page.

In transformative education, there is a paradigm shift from course objectives to course competencies. Historically, syllabi that are developed from the perspective of lesson objectives focus more on what students should know by the end of the course, whereas competency-based approach to course design focuses on what students should be able to do by the end of the course. In order to effectively state and subsequently assess learning competencies and critical thinking skills, action verbs are employed to state course compe-

tencies as advocated in the Bloom's Taxonomy graphic shown in Figure 1.

"Remember" and "Understand" are at the bottom of the pyramid of Bloom's taxonomy because they represent static verbs and require the least amount of learning effort. Instructors should take this graph into serious consideration when developing learning competencies and assessments of a course.

In selecting the course reading material, instructors should ensure that the reading material are void of sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, colorism, ableism, ageism, xenophobia, homophobia and all other isms and phobias that affect people negatively. This is an opportunity for champions of decolonization to decolonize their curriculum making by choosing reading material that are devoid of dehumanizing and colonizing language and history. It is also an opportunity to empower students in the learning process by offering them choice readings (Sleeter, 2008), mirror and window curriculum (Style, 1988), and place-based curriculum (Preston, 2015). One of the essential information that students look for in a syllabus is the text because they want to buy it or order it online in time.

Furthermore, the syllabus contains detailed information about the course assessment process. It includes assignment descriptions, grading rubrics, submission modes, deadlines, and cut-off time after which submissions may or may not be accepted with or without a penalty. Each assignment should also include instructor's preference for total word count, stipulated margin, font, and font size. A rubric is a scoring sheet that shows students how their work will be graded. It provides more clarity to students as to what is expected

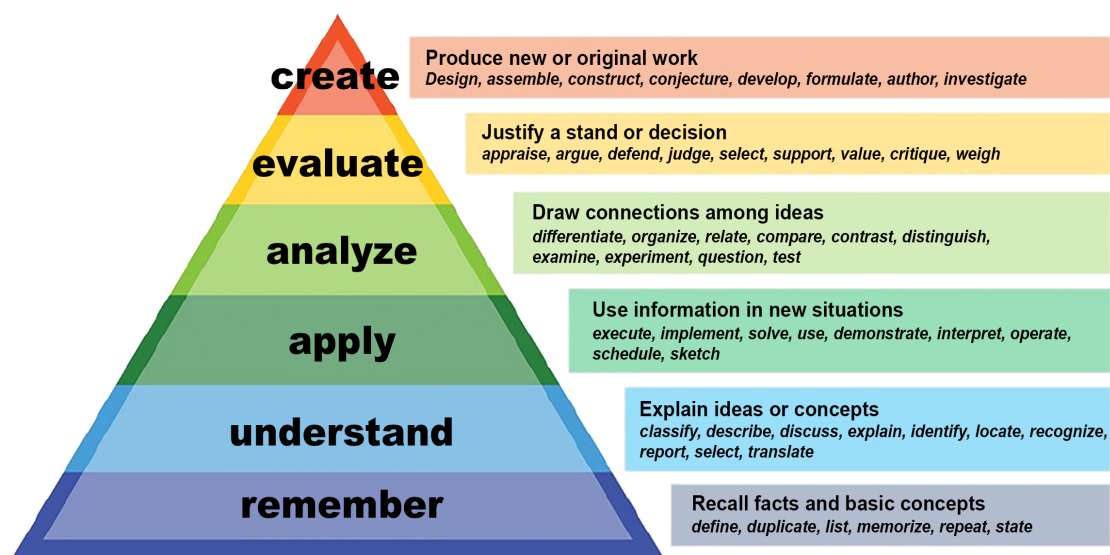


Fig. 1. Courtesy of Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching (Armstrong, 2010)



of them while saving time to instructors because they do not have to give detailed written feedback since it is already included in the rubric. In the syllabus, students are also given the range of scores and their equivalent grades in the rubric, known as grade criteria. For example, the grade criteria have to show in the syllabus that 94% upward in an exam is an A grade and that 59% downward is F. Varying assignments or exam formats is also important because it allows students who are not good test-takers in a proctored room to excel in other assignments done in stress-free settings.

Another vital aspect of the objective information in a syllabus is the reading calendar. There must be a reading or video/audio linked to each class meeting date. For instance, if a class meets on Monday and Wednesday each week, the syllabus should indicate the reading tasks assigned for each day. Students have to be informed on the first day of class that the readings are meant for them to read before coming to class. Each digital reading title should indicate in parenthesis where and how it could be accessed. If it is a book chapter, reference should be made about the specific book and the specific chapter including the page range.

Category Four: Miscellaneous course policies

Course policies in this category embody clarification of behavioral and attitudinal expectations, information about class attendance, late and missing assignments/exams, nature of participation in activities, and general ethics. Some degree programs assess students on professional dispositions which can include general behavior and attitude, dress code, and punctuality. In the absence of an institutional statement on plagiarism and copyright issues, an instructor may insert their own personally worded statement into the syllabus to minimize plagiarism. If the course includes field experience or fieldwork component, the information should be incorporated into the syllabus so that students can plan accordingly. Students need to be aware of how long it would take their instructor to respond to e-mails. Most instructors respond within 24 hours on weekdays. It is necessary to defer to the institutional policy with respect to instructor's promptitude in e-mail responses.

It is worth noting that the structure of syllabus and the sequencing of the content should be given due consideration. The foregoing categories define a general logical order that a typical learner-centered syllabus should follow. Sequencing of course content in a way that promotes scaffolding from the simplest concept to

the most complex one in the learning process is very prior to the first class of the semester. Ideally, a syllabus should be made available to students a week before important. However, owing to the limited scope of this paper, content sequencing techniques will be a separate paper.

Syllabus Accessibility

Once the syllabus is fully designed and meticulously edited to ensure clarity, the instructor should make it available to the students at least twenty-four hours classes begin so that they will have ample time to purchase and ship the course texts and other learning tools before the start of the semester. According to a survey conducted by CampusBooks.com (2016), 67% of the students surveyed said they purchase used textbooks while 55% said they rent textbooks for their courses each semester. Other research institutions have conducted similar research. According to Kelly (2019), 58% of students who responded to a survey on students' habits toward purchasing textbooks said they buy at least one textbook on Amazon. Only 51% said they buy books at their campus bookstore. In the survey, one student said, "School Bookstore typically charges 3x as much as ordering from Amazon or another site." Therefore, it is imperative to share the syllabus days or weeks before the start of the semester or at the very least, provide information about the text weeks earlier.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are the platforms that instructors in developed countries use to share a lot of information with students. Many developing countries cannot afford the cost of these learning management systems (LMS) like Blackboard and Canvas which are designed for schools, colleges, and universities. LMS are used for e-learning as well as to post all relevant information about a course including syllabi, assignments, rubrics, assignment submission portal, attendance tracking, and grade postings. In countries where universities cannot afford these learning management systems, there are other options that faculty members can use to communicate with students for free. There are moodle.com, Google Classroom, Whatsapp, Telegram, etc. A hard copy of a syllabus should be made available to students who do not have access to the internet. The first day of class should also be used to read through the syllabus with the students. Considering that the instructor's role in the classroom is to help students maximize learning outcomes, going over the syllabus thoroughly helps clarify nebulous



areas in the syllabus and set the students up for success right from the beginning of the semester. While what a student discovers in the course of learning is more important than what they cover in class, it is crucial for students to have full access to what is being covered so as to plan ahead of each class session.

Uses of a syllabus

A well-designed syllabus facilitates teaching and learning. It shows a clear pattern of teaching and learning activities built into the course (Slattery & Carlson, 2016). Considering the importance of a syllabus and its ubiquity in higher education in developed countries, it is rather ironic that there is limited research about it. According to Littlefield (1999) a syllabus has several functions:

- It facilitates teaching because it enables teachers to plan better in advance.
- It serves as a binding document between the students and the instructor.
- It sets the tone of the course for the entire semester.
- It helps students plan their learning carefully.
- It ensures smooth and effective continuity of the course content from the originator of the course to subsequent instructors given that there is always a master syllabus that is safely kept by the department chair. Instructors teaching an old course for the first time use the master syllabus as a starting point in developing their own syllabus. They have to build from the previous instructor's syllabus otherwise the original goal of the course could very easily be misconstrued and bastardized overtime.
- It serves as an artifact for promotion, tenure, and for job applications for instructors.
- It can also be argued that a syllabus minimizes students' unnecessary outreach to the instructor since effective syllabi pre-emptively answer students' questions.

Course expectations set forth in the syllabus and explained by the instructor on the first day of class can affect students' interest in the course on the first day of the class. Transformative educators do not scare students away from their course; they attract them to their course and work with them to address any individual concern about the course. In addition, using the syllabus as a contractual document between the student and the instructor is very important because students have

the propensity to feel cheated in their grades when they did not do well in a test. To avoid any possible lawsuit from students, some universities even require students to read and sign the syllabus on the first day of the course so that students cannot successfully challenge in a court of law any aspect of the signed syllabus in due course.

The syllabus can serve as an artifact in a job application portfolio. It is common for faculty applying for a college/university teaching position to carry along to interviews their portfolio which, among many other things, includes syllabi of the different courses they have taught. It is also a standard practice for faculty seeking tenure and promotion to include copies of syllabi of all the courses they have designed and/or taught. When evaluating professors' teaching skills, evaluators (who most often are peers) are expected to review the faculty's syllabi and observe them teach. Thus, an instructor's teaching philosophy can be easily gauged through a review of the syllabus than through a one-session teaching observation.

Backward design of a syllabus

According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005) backward design entails developing a syllabus beginning with course goals and working backward to lay bare what learners need to know in order to meet them as opposed to the traditional method which focuses on the coverage of topics and contents recommended by the government or accreditation bodies. While instructors may erroneously want to begin a syllabus design with content and technical details, a syllabus creation should begin with the goals, objectives and competencies, stating the skills students should be able to demonstrate by the end of the course. In the backward design process, instructors ensure that attention is paid not only to content coverage, but also to the purpose, usefulness, and the impact of the course on students. The following preliminary questions are crucial in the syllabus creation process:

1. What is important for students to learn?
2. How will the instructor and their students see learning happening?
3. What will the instructor and the students need to do for learning to take place?

With a backward design, instructors are able to align their course goals and learning objectives with teaching activities as well as with course assessments. In this regard, students are consistently familiar with the course content and its goals. There are three stages



of backward design:

Stage One: Desired Outcomes: At this stage, the instructor starts the syllabus design with a deep reflection on the goals, objectives/competencies of the course by pondering over questions such as: What is important for learners to know and do by the end of the course? What knowledge or skills are students expected to acquire by the end of the course? What standards are supposed to be met? What are the transfer competencies that are expected? When the course competencies have been conceptualized and stated in active verbs, the instructor then reflects profoundly on the different measurable evidence which is in Stage Two of this process.

Stage Two: Acceptable evidence for instructors and students: This stage is about assessments and evaluations. How does an instructor assess students understanding and progress to determine whether or not learning occurred? What will an instructor consider as acceptable proficiency of the learning outcomes? The instructor comes up with different assessment tools that effectively measure the learning outcomes of Stage One.

Stage Three: Learning activities: What sorts of learning material and activities are put in place that will result in the evidence of desired outcomes being met?

As shown in these three stages, instead of starting a course curriculum with dense content of what students should learn, the instructor commences with what they envision as desired outcomes and walk backward to the content which embodies the learning activities. In planning the course, some of the critical questions that guide an instructor in the choice of learning material and activities are: What learning material is suitable for achieving the course objectives/competencies? How will this material be sequenced to maximize knowledge acquisition? What pedagogic activities will accelerate knowledge gain, knowledge transfer and knowledge application in real-world contexts? Careful responses to the foregoing questions would ensure an effective planning and development of the syllabus.

Conclusion

Using a backward design to develop an effective syllabus that employs different pedagogic approaches to impart knowledge in students should be the priority instead of focusing on exposing them to large quantity of contents through the traditional lecture method that they can barely retain (Cooper et al., 2016). Miller

(1927) defined lecture method as "... that mysterious process by means of which the contents of the note-book of the professor are transferred through the instrument of the fountain pen to the note-book of the student without passing through the mind of either." In employing transformative learning theories to design a syllabus and teach 21st century skills, the instructional focus shifts from teaching objective facts to teaching core competencies of the course, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, information and computer literacy, collaboration, and creativity. A syllabus should promote heuristic pedagogy so that students can develop more confidence in their abilities to handle complex problems.

Effective teaching is preceded by constructive learner-centered course planning that revolves around syllabus design. A 21st century syllabus that is aimed at maximizing learning outcomes should carry an overtone of learner-centered pedagogy throughout the syllabus. Reading materials, assignments, and instructional strategies laid out in any syllabus should highlight twenty-first century skills as presented earlier. Some of these skills may not be woven into the core content of the course, rather they may occur mostly during the content delivery process, that is during the teaching of the course. A course may emphasize critical thinking and collaboration skills in their syllabus development by showing what sorts of learning, teaching, and assessment activities may help accomplish the two skills. The physics instructor who is conscious of the 21st century skills that are being reiterated in the university may redesign the syllabus to ensure that the said skills are being covered through the curriculum or through the instruction.

Education is designed to educate; to teach what is worth knowing, but that is not known.

It is worth imagining what is worth knowing in community health today that is not known by citizens and the possible impact it has on their health, in particular, and their lives, in general. A carefully crafted learner-centered syllabus that demonstrates the transformative potentials of education is what all college instructors should strive for in the courses they teach. Education is about transformation and that transformation entails changing frames of reference such as habits of minds, perspectives, and mindsets during an educational process to be more inclusive, reflective so as to transfer knowledge and apply it in other real-life contexts. A syllabus that promotes deeper learning and knowledge transfer maximizes learning outcomes.



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BOOK REVIEW

Zhaoyi Zhang

Caralyn Zehnder, Cynthia Alby, Karynne Kleine, Julia Metzker. (2021). *Learning that Matters: A Field Guide to Course Design for Transformative Education*. Myers Education Press. 225 pp. \$ 111 (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-1975504502

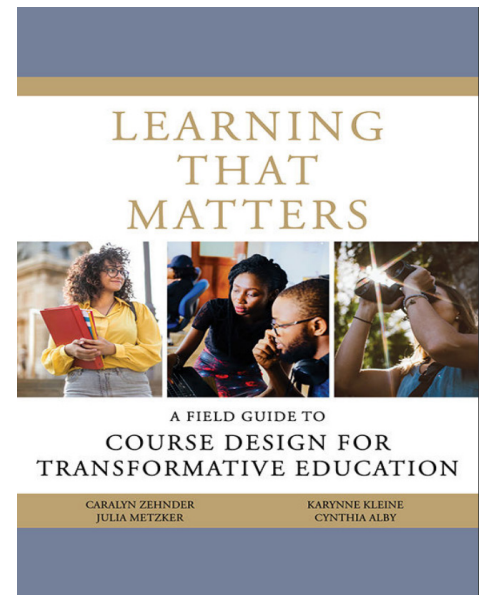
In today's 21st century, the traditional way of teaching has mostly given way to transformative education in which teachers should not only impart knowledge, but also facilitate the acquisition of skills by students (David, 2016). Educators in transformative education play the role of helping students to understand and acknowledge "the dynamics between their inner and outer worlds" (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p.261). This book provides guidance to teachers in the higher education system to help them design courses that can create meaningful learning experiences for students and actively engage them in social issues.

Summary

In this book, "learning" covers multiple layers of meaning, including learning theories, learning outcomes and assessments, course design, teaching strategies and techniques, etc. As educators who will pursue careers at universities or are already teaching in higher education, no matter whether you are novice or senior, this book provides scaffolding for you from three aspects: a). how to design transformative lessons, how to create successful transformative learning experiences for students, and how to shape the identity of the transformative teacher.

This book consists of 10 chapters. And each chapter is completed by a team of four brilliant and professional educators who have specific disciplinary expertise. Collaboration is constantly brought up in the book. Whether it is the way the book is written or the various activities that are recommended throughout the book, readers will find traces of collaboration. This is the element that the authors are proud of.

Full listing of authors and contacts can be found at the end of this article.



Each chapter of the book covers ample content and inspiration. Chapter one ("Teaching Matters") begins with the challenges that American higher education is facing in the present era, which include unequal distribution of educational resources, teachers who are very productive in research but weak in pedagogical knowledge, unequal power relations between "Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and their White counterparts" (p. 2), and the lack of capacity of higher education institutions to respond quickly to unexpected situations (e.g. Covid-19). All these problems are calling for changes in course design. The authors mention that educators in higher education institutions should regard exposing all of their students to transformative learning experiences as their teaching goal. This chapter also contains the introduction for all four authors and their beliefs about course design and teachers' professional development. At the end of this chapter, the authors provide a guide to using this book so that readers can get insights into how to get the most out of this book.



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In chapter two ("From the Foundation Up"), the authors firstly mention that trying to turn the classroom into a base for transformative education requires fostering creativity, and that means a degree of "improvisation" (p.18). This chapter provides four important concepts and principles for supporting this improvisation. The first one is about equity. The authors extract decentering pedagogy from critical theory, starting from no longer viewing students "within a deficit framework" (p. 27) and cherishing all students' funds of knowledge, the authors then propose pedagogical approaches that promote equity. The second concept is aimed at the constructivist approach. In this section, by explaining the crucial role of constructivism in acquiring knowledge, the authors remind readers that students in the classroom are not just passive recipients, and transformative education cannot be teacher-centered. The third concept emphasizes creativity in promoting students' engagement. The authors point out that the course focusing on active learning could be helpful to students' scores. It is vital for teachers to understand how motivation influences learning. The fourth concept, therefore, focuses on the role of motivation. In this part, the question of whether students are motivated by mastery or performance goals is discussed. In the end, the authors hope teachers who have already built their teaching foundations could think about how to connect these concepts and theories with students' deep learning.

In chapter three ("Design Matter"), the authors shift the center from concepts to practical issues, focusing on course design. The aim of this chapter is trying to convince teachers that using design to guide teaching can be a very beneficial thing for both teachers and students. Additionally, the authors provide three complementary and connected designing approaches for teachers, which are design thinking, backward design, and universal design for learning (UDL). In short, design thinking is human/student-centered. It firstly needs teachers to develop empathy and collect students' information before class, then anticipates the kinds of problems they will encounter in their classes, lists the worst possible outcomes for their classes, and find out the solutions in advance. This approach offers a framework for planning courses that are closely tied to the student experience. Backward design is a course design approach guided by learning objectives, which requires teachers to think about what students need most to be successful. For UDL, it is an approach considering serving more students. It aims at establishing a

learning environment to support students' diversity. In the end, the authors mention that the strategies provided in this chapter are important and will be repeatedly mentioned in the following chapters.

Chapter four ("Portable Outcomes") is about portable outcomes, which means that students can take what they learn in one class to subsequent classes, and even to later work and life, rather than outcomes that are forgotten once the test is completed. In this chapter, the authors begin by differentiating the definition of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and aspirational goals. Compared with aspirational goals which could be long-term and ideal, SLOs are more specific and measurable, which refer to as knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Before introducing how to design SLOs, the authors demonstrate the "alignment" between SLOs and "the coherence students experience" in the classroom. (p.83). Then, the authors give suggestions for how to write substantive SLOs. They should be student-centered, measurable, interlude, and inclusive. Specifically, students are able to know what they should anticipate from the course, and realize how they will perform in class to meet the outcomes. In addition, the authors mention that substantive SLOs should take affection into consideration, which means that teachers should present clearly what they want their students to care about after finishing the course. What is more, well-designed SLOs should also care about students' diversity so as to avoid biases. In the end, the authors advocate that after encompassing the above four characteristics, a truly portable goal must be to help students achieve higher order thinking skills that include analyzing and evaluating.

Chapter five provides an approach, which is also a framework, called the Dilemma, Issue, or Question Approach (DIQ). The authors summarize it as an approach to connecting subject knowledge with social issues. Teachers utilize this approach to guide students using the knowledge they have learnt in class to solve real social problems. The authors point out that by doing this, students can more easily understand the usefulness of the knowledge and the reason why they need to learn it. In this chapter, multiple resources including reference websites and books are given to help readers think about how to design their DIQ framework. The authors also focus on describing the four steps of designing DIQ from brainstorming to getting feedback. It is important to summarize from the authors that DIQ breaks the status quo that critical thinking skill is only limited to "elitist activity" (p. 114).



In Chapter six (“Connected Assessment”), the authors spend a great deal of time explaining assessment-related knowledge. The significance of this chapter is evident in the way that it helps address teachers’ ongoing focus on what a few students cannot do, in suggesting that teachers need to think about how to support the progress of all students, and in the need to recognize the strengths that each individual brings to the classroom. The authors start by expressing their concerns about unequal issues brought about by today’s assessments. In the next part, instead of explaining “assessment jargon”, the authors present assessment along “two continuums”, which are from connected to unconnected assessment, and from summative to formative assessment. In terms of comparing unconnected and connected assessment, the authors interpret connected assessment as the one which underlines the growth and achievements of students. It is aligned with SLOs with a stepped increase in difficulty as a way to see students’ progress. The authors also compare formative and summative assessment and suggest that formative assessment is not done by scoring at the end, but by collecting and using the information obtained during the learning process to change and improve students’ learning process. It is a relatively fair way of assessing. The rest of the chapter is reserved for how to provide effective feedback to students, which also contains the forms, focuses, rubrics that teachers need to pay attention to when they give feedback.

Chapter seven (“The Power of Projects”) involves some of the practical skills that teachers use to design classroom activities that can effectively engage students and are simultaneously convenient for teachers to give formative feedback. The authors start this chapter by explaining the reason for the popularity of project-based learning. Then, three characteristics that should be equipped by a good project are explained in detail by the authors, which are authentic, collaborative, and transparent. The authors give many examples of actual classroom activities to make these three characteristics more visual and tangible.

Chapter eight (“Strategies that Matters”) mentions teaching strategies which could lead to significant learning. The authors introduce a concept of high-quality strategies which should be “active and engaging, intrinsically motivating, sticky, and culturally affirming” (p.207). A good high-quality strategy does not have to meet all of these characteristics, but it does need to equip many of them. Next, the authors mention the

need for teachers to develop different strategies at different stages of learning. The authors also give different and respective suggestions and activities that teachers can do to prepare students for learning, engage students in learning, discuss in the classroom, and make learning visible so that teachers can choose and implement them according to their own conditions and classroom conditions. This chapter concludes with a guide for readers to reflect on their own strategies and a summary of high-quality strategies so that readers will have a deeper understanding of what strategies can cause deep and significant learning.

In chapter nine (“Supporting Students”), how to provide targeted support to students to ensure their success, effectively address inequities in education, and ensure enduring learning is a core topic. The authors provide ideas from four perspectives. Firstly, teachers should guide students to find value in learning, which means that if students can understand the purpose of the course and tap into the value of the course, they can be more engaged. Secondly, the authors mention that by praising students for their efforts and scoring less, teachers should provide the support that allows students to be unafraid of challenges and setbacks, and allows students to develop a “growth mindset” (p.263). Thirdly, Teachers have the responsibility to make students find a sense of belonging in the classroom. Lastly, the authors mention the negative stereotype that students develop when they experience setbacks, which is also called “stereotype threat” in the chapter. It is important to help students reflect on their self-values to counter this stereotype.

As a summary and ending chapter, chapter ten (“Your Turn: Self- and Collective Efficacy”) plays a crucial role in helping reshape a transformative teacher’s identity. As was mentioned in Chapter two that innovation is vital for developing transformative education. The authors in this chapter introduce Bandura’s “collective-efficacy” to underline the significance of collaboration for innovation (p.281). At the same time, it is also important to build a community of mutual trust and respect for students, in which students can obtain the necessary skills. The authors also recommend that teachers join or establish teacher learning communities, or “communities of change agents”. There they can monitor and help each other to become qualified transformative educators (p.287).



Evaluation

The authors have succeeded in achieving the goal of improving and expanding teachers' skill sets described at the beginning of the book. Especially when reading chapters 3-9, which encompass all the things educators should consider when designing a course.

The whole book is highly readable and interactive. As I took notes while reading, I found that I could easily extract the key information from each chapter and understand it without much difficulty. Another strength of the book is reflected in its writing structure. Each chapter begins with a *Preflection* in a box, which may be a thought-provoking question or a small survey, giving the reader a preliminary idea of the chapter's content before they even start reading the text. Next, the authors list the activities they set up in this chapter and what they hope the reader will ultimately gain from the chapter's contents. By doing this, the authors make the outcomes of the chapter transparent to readers, which allows the scrutiny from readers when they finish this chapter. In writing each chapter, instead of explaining theories and concepts, the authors present numerous activities, their own experiences, and evidence-based strategies. After presenting a piece of content, the authors set up a "reflect to learn" session, asking one or two questions to give readers a short buffer and reflection time before moving on to the next module to better consolidate what they have just read. Each chapter follows the same pattern, starting with *Preflection* and ending with ensuring that the readers can make the design happen. With this step-by-step guidance, readers will become more and more confident and motivated.

Conclusion

Overall, facilitating students to find motivation and meaning in the university's classroom, acquiring the competence needed for the 21st century, realizing and addressing social inequities are goals that teachers should be committed to designing their courses, and that is also what this book is trying to help teachers achieve. As a guide book, *Learning That Matters: A Field Guide to Course Design for Transformative Education* is suitable for both individual educators and a group, like a faculty study group, since collaboration is ceaselessly mentioned throughout the book. Teachers can also practice the activities and evidence-based strategies in the book in a selective manner.

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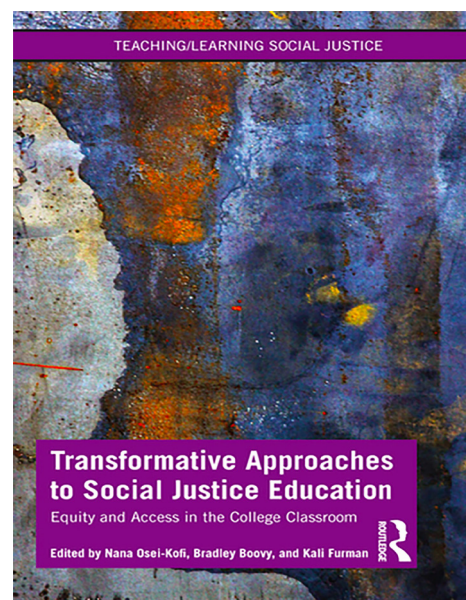


BOOK REVIEW

Michelle A. Medved

Osei-Kofi, N., Boovy, B., & Furman, K. (Eds.). (2022). *Transformative approaches to social justice education: Equity and access in the college classroom*. Routledge. 304 pp. \$ 31.96 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-0367551032

While social justice has become an increasing priority in many public institutions in the country, the Difference, Power, and Discrimination program at Oregon State University has been enlightening undergraduates for 30 years. Born out of student advocacy and the faculty that supports them, the program is an established collection of diversity education courses and faculty training seminars. The program has survived budget cuts, critics, and other challenges throughout its 30 years. *Transformative Approaches to Social Justice Education* describes the methods of the program pragmatically and unflinchingly so readers of the book can apply them to their classrooms.



Introduction

The book is comprised of four sections, all of which feature strategies and methods from DPD faculty that teach undergraduate students about different aspects of identity. Accessibility needs, race, gender, sexuality, and economic class differences are all addressed in the book. Additionally, a wide array of techniques is utilized throughout the book. Everything from collaborating with archivists and farmworker unions to incorporating social justice into STEM coursework is discussed. DPD is a requirement for undergraduates within their general education classes, but it does not add to the number of credits the students need to take (Osei-Kofi, et al., 2021, p. x-xi). It has the two-fold benefits of both broadening white students' perspectives and helping students from historically marginalized groups feel more included. Faculty have also benefited from this program, which features specific training programs to

help faculty embody the spirit of DPD within their classes and pedagogy.

The following review will cover the book's four sections in order, touching on its fifteen chapters and their respective authors. The first section, "Archives and Power: Engaging History Collaboratively," covers the history of the DPD program and how to incorporate diverse narratives through history. The second section, "Frameworks for Transformative Pedagogies" discusses the challenges of making courses more accessible both in the classroom and online. "Destabilizing Dominant Narratives," the third section, addresses the triumphs and challenges of teaching difficult subjects such as race, economic class, and transgender rights. The final section, "Rethinking Approaches to Disciplinary Content" provides the reader with meaningful ways to incorporate social justice topics in both STEM and humanities-based courses.

Full listing of authors and contacts can be found at the end of this article.



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Section 1: Archives and Power: Engaging History Collaboratively

Echoing the sentiments of the introduction, the first chapter by Kali Furman addresses the circumstances in which the DPD program was created. It starts by addressing the racist founding of the state of Oregon. Oregon's state constitution is the only one created with a clause banning Black people from residing there (p. 4). When Oregon State University was founded, it too became an institution based on the interests of white Americans, including being established on the stolen land of Native Americans (p. 5). Over time, the demands of students and the student body's diversity have grown. After incidences of racism on campus over the decades, student activists proposed creating a diversity education program to try to make the university more inclusive (p. 3). The fact that the DPD program has survived multiple budget cuts and other threats to its existence, is a testament to the power of OSU student advocacy and the faculty that supports them. The creation of the program and its continued existence demonstrates the ongoing need for such a program at a primarily white institution. Crucially, Furman notes that white and students of color still have "divergent" experiences at OSU (p. 5). Consequently, the legacy of "student activism and institutional moves to create offices or programs" to undertake "issues around diversity and inequity continue today" (p. 5).

The following two chapters, written by archivist Natalia Fernandez and ethnic scholar Natchee Blu Barnd, feature methods for teaching social justice through history. Fernandez shares the powerful possibilities for archival texts to promote social justice both within OSU and in the larger community. She shares her collaboration with professors to create eye-opening document analysis activities for students. When voices were absent from the OSU archives, Fernandez sought to find representation for them. Fernandez and Boovy co-founded the OSU Queer Archives in 2014 and have expanded it with the help of student interviewers (pp. 22-25). Barnd's chapter details his students' creation of social justice tours of the college town in which OSU is located. He describes how walking tours "remind us to pay attention to our relationships to the land (and its people) wherever we find ourselves," something that he attributes to his upbringing as an indigenous man (p. 43). From the beginning of each course, "the students directly practice techniques for collecting, analyzing, and incorporating community histories and highlighting contested productions of geography, especially in

relation to race and racism" (p. 44). After taking a tour, the shared stories come to him every time he walks by that location. Both Fernandez and Barnd provide practical ways to implement these activities and events. Universities' archival resources provide transformative tools for sharing new perspectives on history with students.

Section 2: Frameworks for Transformative Pedagogies

Chapters Four and Five carry important reminders of equity and accessibility for anyone in the education field. Written by Jenkins and Smith, Chapter Four covers instructional design and their efforts to improve the accessibility of courses for students with disabilities through the principles of Universal Design. Jenkins also shares her experiences with having disabilities while in academia. Their chapter discusses the ubiquity of ableism in academia and how Universal Design principles can help fight ableism (pp. 68-69). The chapter features recommendations for implementation, including a tool for identifying the perceived challenges of an assignment and encouraging consideration for what consequences an academic requirement might have (pp. 76-78). They suggest providing options that best fit the needs of students including flexible attendance and multiple modalities to demonstrate learning (pp. 80-83).

In Chapter Five, Myers expounds on many of the same concerns as Jenkins and Smith but for online academic settings. She argues, "design principles for accessibility should be a baseline" for online course design and suggests going further by including cultural responsiveness (p. 99). Because online courses can exasperate inequities and accessibility issues, Myers explains some of the steps that instructors can take to allow flexibility, alleviate some of the instructor-student power imbalances, and enlighten students to institutional discrimination through course tasks (pp. 90-96). Myers successfully brings awareness to considerable injustices and guides online instructors on how to promote greater equity and accessibility in their courses.

Chapters Six and Seven share many commonalities in the internal, empathetic work that they suggest instructors and students take part in to bring greater awareness to injustices. Though the chapters cover different frameworks, they are both highly internalized and potentially emotionally difficult. Clough warns in Chapter Six that teaching peace literacy requires a deep personal understanding of one's biases and it can be



draining (p.106). Pitcher and Martinez note in Chapter Seven that the sentipensante work, largely done through reflective activities, is not something that everyone is ready for, especially in a public setting (p.136). If one is ready to take on this work, then Clough suggests peace literacy to build empathic soft skills and promote consciousness to both personal and structural biases and the systems that perpetuate them (pp. 106-107). Pitcher and Martinez describe sentipensante as more of a belief system to promote one's sense of belonging and restore their sense of being able to live their life wholly (pp. 127-129). Although powerful philosophies, both chapters hint at the challenges of tackling emotional issues correctly in the classroom. There needs to be extensive training and personal reflection on the instructor's part to lead these types of activities (p. 129). These chapters should serve as a primer to these frameworks and further exploration should be done before attempting to use them in the classroom. However, when well done, students can "gain confidence, find strength, and resilience through their narratives combined with history and social issues" (p. 135).

Section 3: Destabilizing Dominant Narratives

Containing some of the most engaging chapters of the book, Section Three aims directly at how to teach difficult topics of social justice and the impact a professor's positionality can have on student interpretations of the content. Though positionality is prominent in *Transformative Approaches*, it is particularly addressed in how this section and Section Four's Ronald Mize approach their respective social justice issues.

Chapters Eight and Nine prioritize bringing greater positionality to their respective fields. In Chapter Eight, Rakes and Driskill write about the specific inclusion of trans studies as part of its Queer Studies program. Within the field of Queer Studies, white voices have been dominant, and OSU's QS courses work to disrupt that focus. Instead, by giving privilege to voices from people of color, various levels of (dis)abilities, and income levels, OSU's program promotes intersectionality (pp. 146, 149). In doing this, white students must consider the spectrum of experiences and identities among the LGBTQ+ community and who is impacted by systems of oppression. They then teach how to grapple with anger at systemic oppression and put it towards "the fruit of collective liberation" instead of using anger to be destructive (P. 144). In Chapter Nine, Maldonado focuses on the ways that she incorporates intersection-

ality into her Latinx studies classes by including race and ethnicity, gender, and labor rights. She also reflects on how her own identity as a Latina impact how she is perceived by students. Many of her students have never had a Latinx educator before and they sometimes respond in different ways. Students of color may be validated by her presence and some, primarily white students seem to think she brings a "Latinx agenda" (pp. 160-161). These reactions from students bring a lot of assumptions to what can already be a difficult topic to teach. Additionally, Maldonado explains how she handles students who do not believe in her course's relevance. She offers strategies to help students make personal connections and classroom exercises to discuss inequalities, workers' rights, and unions (pp. 167-168). Her inclusion of student reactions underlines both the work that educators of color can achieve, but also the biases they may encounter from others.

Growing up working-class herself, Hurst references back to her own identity in Chapter Ten. There seems to be a blind spot for the role economic class plays in a person's identity, privilege, and understanding of the world. Hurst explains that while directly addressing economic class in the classroom is forceful, equally important is maintaining the privacy of those less privileged. Sharing personal experiences can be uncomfortable or even humiliating, especially for those that are less privileged. Instead, she suggests personal reflective exercises on privilege should be done privately or anonymously (pp. 181-182). However uncomfortable, we must keep tackling economic class and privilege. In talking about class, she explains, it helps "us build those necessary alliances between Black, Brown, and white people" to stop the "racists" from winning (p. 175).

Boovy and Osei-Kofi finish the section by describing their individual experiences teaching about race at a predominantly white institution. They argue that OSU's history, culture, and legacy all carry white dominance, which is why teaching about race is so crucial (p. 192). The teaching method that they share is "teacher as text" which started as a way for teachers to demonstrate their authentic selves and help students learn complexity around social issues like race, poverty, and police brutality (p. 193). Both writers share their own experiences of how their identities impacted how students respond to them for better or worse (pp. 196-201). They agree that misunderstandings will happen when teaching about race, which is why race must continue to be addressed (pp. 200-202).



Section 4: Rethinking Approaches to Disciplinary Content

Koehlinger and Freehling-Burton begin the section by delineating the importance of challenging the Christian-based norms of mainstream American culture, for the country is far more religiously diverse than it may appear (p. 207). They share how their faiths impact their teachings and students' interpretations of their teachings (pp. 208-210). The chapter moves on to historical and contemporary anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in the U.S. (pp. 216-223). The reader will come away from the chapter reflecting on the perpetration of Christian dominance and on how harmful stereotyping of non-Christians is damaging to religious tolerance in the U.S. (p. 212).

Mize is the first generation of his family to have not spent time in the fields. In Chapter Thirteen, he discusses the intentional design of his course, which focuses on farmworker justice movements throughout American history (p. 237). To tie in the DPD program requirements, there is a particular emphasis placed on "the social construction of difference, the historical and contemporary relevance of racism and other forms of institutional discrimination, and how these social categories shape the lived experiences of farmworkers residing in the United States" (p. 238). He frequently collaborates with a union leader for this course and is quick to explain how service-learning can be done poorly (p. 237). Aims to help farmworkers should not be an act of voyeurism (pp. 240-241). Mize's thoughtful analysis of service-learning and consideration for the farmworkers make it one of the more impactful and meaningful chapters of the book.

In Chapter Fourteen, Borradaile challenges the perception that social justice education has no place in STEM courses. She meaningfully embeds intersections of STEM and human rights together, such as how the American government uses surveillance against political and racial groups (p. 257). Borradaile provides specifics on navigating these issues and what methods to use. One is using "affinity groups" where students work to come to a consensus on incidents of discrimination that have occurred at their university and how they should respond. Students discuss the pros and cons of different actions, recognizing that there often is not a perfect response (253-254). Additionally, she shares the unfamiliarity of teaching and learning about emotionally difficult topics for STEM instructors and students. Borradaile herself had to adjust and she has found that students understand best from first-person

narratives. It adds a voice to sometimes complex and difficult topics (255). Though challenging, Borradaile demonstrates that bridging STEM and social justice is possible.

Chapter Fifteen rounds out the book by alluding back to the power of teaching history in a reflective way. Richards describes her work to "disrupt students' notions of objective research" and demonstrates that historical work is "intimate, value-laden, and rich with struggles and questions of self" (p. 268). Chappell and Richards remind us of the power of primary documents for helping students "see the multiple dimensions of systemic and pervasive mechanisms of oppression in operation on multiple scales (p. 266). By taking classic history teaching methods and layering them with critical analysis, Chappell and Richards add to what many history educators already do.

Evaluation

As an educator, the themes of social justice and anti-racism have been recently reverberating throughout both the K-12 and postsecondary institutions that I am a part of. It would be easy to write this book off as one following the current trends. However, this compilation sets itself apart because of its thoughtfulness, variety, and experience. Few other universities, and institutions for that matter, have a diversity and inclusivity program that is thirty years old. Oregon State University was not just following a trend, but in response to student advocacy and demands three decades ago. What better source to learn about teaching social justice than a pioneer in the field?

This level of experience is reflected in the various methodologies described in *Transformative Approaches*. The best chapters describe thoughtful consideration and planning, drawing from learned experiences and student reactions. They also featured underrepresented topics, such as transgender and disability rights. Notably insightful chapters include Mize's "Sí, se puede! Teaching farmworker justice" and Hurst's "Talking about class" for their insight and consideration of both the topics they teach and the students they work with. Mize co-planned with a local union leader, deciding that "this could not be yet another class where students learn about farmworkers and to repeat the surface representations of them" (p. 239). Mize's community partnership with a local union, as well as archivist Natalia Fernandez's collaborations with faculty, and Barnd's local history tours are all examples of the ways the DPD program extends beyond the OSU campus.



Many chapters were helpful with specific strategies that could be somewhat simply implemented in busy educators' lives. Myers' "Critical Pedagogy Online" and Jenkins and Smith's chapter covering Universal Design both provide thoughtful tools for making courses more accessible and flexible –especially pertinent in the time of a pandemic. For a handbook on social justice education, the chapters that featured pragmatic, simple suggestions were often the most valuable.

The most difficult chapters often featured pedagogies or frameworks that were out of reach for the average reader. They contained warnings about needing extensive training and not being for everyone. While the chapters served as primers on sentipensante and peace literacy, they also described deeply philosophical (perhaps even spiritual) cognitive work. The chapters provided exercises to utilize but were also tinged with the implication that the pedagogies were extremely difficult to conduct correctly. They seem to be more intimidating than easily accessible.

Conclusion

Transformative Approaches incorporates positionality, personal narratives, and experience-tested teaching methods to thoughtfully create a social justice handbook that educators from many fields will find valuable. Its personal sentiments and a wide variety of topics set it apart from other resources with a narrower focus. Of its highlights are highly implementable strategies that have been time-tested and advocacy for underrepresented topics in diversity education. Its few downfalls are simply a few chapters that require much further education or lack realistic recommendations for classroom usage. Educators are busy and want practical takeaways. As Smith and Jenkins describe their approach to increasing course accessibility, it "is a pedagogical practice that requires ongoing commitment and negotiation" (p. 80). Achieving greater equity and promoting social justice in educational institutions must also take this long-haul, step by step approach, hence the importance of manageable frameworks and methods like this book provides.

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In Memoriam: Dr. BAME Patience Penn Teneng



Dr. Bame Patience Teneng Penn
1973-2022

The editors of the *Global Journal of Transformative Education* wish to express our sorrow at the news of the death of one of our friends and contributors.

Dr. Bame Patience Teneng Penn was a Senior Lecturer of Educational Administration at The University of Yaounde1 in Cameroon.

She passed away unexpectedly on March 5, 2022.

Her passion for education and her commitment to sharing her work with a global community will be missed.



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