

Toward Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Teaching in the French as a Second Language Classroom

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In English-majority contexts such as British Columbia, French second language (FSL) teachers are increasingly encountering students who are also learning French in addition to English and their home languages. Research findings show that dual language learners are successfully supported through multilingual pedagogies that acknowledge and explicitly value students' prior learning experiences and multilingual knowledge as an integral resource in their language learning. This poses a particular challenge for FSL teacher candidates whose own language learning experiences have been shaped by institutional bilingualism and monoglossic approaches in bilingual education contexts. This article sets out the implications of this challenge and then describes a teacher education course that specifically addresses the Teaching of English as an additional language (TEAL) with teacher candidates in an elementary French specialist cohort program at a university in British Columbia. The discussion provides an overview of the course and then describes some of the ways in which critical language awareness can be fostered among FSL teacher candidates' strategies to encourage a linguistically and culturally responsive approach to FSL teaching.

Dans un contexte majoritairement anglophone comme celui de la Colombie-Britannique, les enseignantes et enseignants de français langue seconde (FLS) se trouvent de plus en plus souvent face à des élèves qui apprennent le français en plus de l'anglais et de la langue qu'ils ou elles parlent à la maison. Les recherches démontrent que les élèves qui apprennent deux langues bénéficient de pédagogies multilingues efficaces qui reconnaissent et mettent explicitement en valeur leurs expériences d'apprentissage antérieures et leurs connaissances multilingues, et ce, en en faisant une partie intégrante des ressources dans lesquelles ils peuvent puiser au cours de leur apprentissage linguistique. Cela pose un défi particulier pour les enseignantes et enseignants de FLS en formation dont les expériences d'apprentissage linguistique ont été façonnées par le bilinguisme institutionnel et une conception monoglossique des contextes éducatifs bilingues. Le présent article expose les implications de ce défi et décrit ensuite un cours de formation d'enseignantes et d'enseignants qui porte spécifiquement sur l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue complémentaire (TEAL) dans le cadre d'un programme offert par une université britannico-colombienne à une cohorte de spécialistes de la langue française au niveau élémentaire. La discussion présente un aperçu du cours et décrit ensuite certaines façons de favoriser le développement d'une conscience

linguistique critique dans le cadre des stratégies des enseignantes et enseignants de FLS en formation afin de promouvoir le développement d'une conception de l'enseignement qui prenne en compte les réalités linguistiques et culturelles.

KEYWORDS: French second language teaching, preservice teacher education, English language learners, multilingual pedagogies

Introduction

Canadian schools have seen a steady increase in English language learners (ELLs) over the past decades (Cummins & Persad, 2014; Duff, 2007), more so recently due to the growing number of international students (Deschambault, 2018). In British Columbia, alongside pull-out sheltered English language classes, students learning English as an additional language (EAL) are generally integrated into mainstream content classrooms (Gunderson, D'Silva, & Murphy Odo, 2014), requiring that all teachers have some knowledge about and are open to linguistically and culturally responsive teaching approaches (Cummins & Early, 2011). To date, Canadian research has shown some positive outcomes regarding newcomer students' academic achievement in mainstream English language programs (Cummins, Mirza, & Stille, 2012). In English-majority contexts such as British Columbia, French second language (FSL) teachers are increasingly encountering students who are also learning French in addition to English and their home languages (Carr, 2013; Dagenais, 2003). Research here, too, has found positive success rates for ELLs in programs such as Core French and French immersion (Mady, 2010, 2015) as well as Intensive French (Carr, 2009), not only in terms of achievement but also with regard to high levels of motivation to learn both of Canada's official languages, English and French. In other words, teacher education programs are not only preparing English content teachers but also FSL teachers to address the language needs of ELLs in core French, French immersion, or intensive French.

In certain teacher education programs, one approach has been to have all teacher candidates enroll in a mandatory course or module that applies multiliteracies and multilingual approaches to English learning across the curriculum through the integration of language and subject matter content (e.g., Coelho, 2016; Early, Potts, & Mohan, 2005). Research findings show that dual language learners are successfully supported through multilingual pedagogies that acknowledge and explicitly value students' prior learning experiences and multilingual knowledge as an integral resource in their language learning (Cenoz, 2013; Dagenais, 2013; García & Flores, 2012). This poses a particular challenge for FSL teacher candidates whose own language learning experiences have been shaped by institutional bilingualism and monoglossic

approaches in bilingual education contexts (e.g., Lambert, 1984), which prioritize “French-only” policies grounded in ideologies of authentic and purist language and culture (Cummins, 2007; Martin-Jones, 2007; Wernicke, 2017). This article sets out the implications of this challenge and then describes a teacher education course that specifically addresses the Teaching of English as an additional language (TEAL) with teacher candidates in an elementary French specialist cohort program at a university in British Columbia. The article provides an overview of the TEAL course and then describes some of the strategies used to encourage a linguistically and culturally responsive approach to FSL teaching.

The Challenge: Monoglossic Practices in Bilingual Education

For the past 5 decades, French language education in Canada has been solidly entrenched in a policy of official bilingualism that guarantees language education in English and French while marginalizing speakers of so-called nonofficial language communities, including Indigenous languages (Haque & Patrick, 2015; McNamara, 2011). This context continues to inform who has access to bilingual education and the right to a plurilingual identity and constitutes an important factor in how FSL teacher candidates approach French language learning. One implication of this model for language education at the K-12 level is that it has traditionally excluded ELLs from French second language programming based on the idea articulated in federal policy that integration into only one official language is necessary to fully participate in Canadian society (Mady, 2007). The notion of two distinct languages has also impacted the structure of language programming, resulting in “dual track” schools that see students in the English stream have little contact with French immersion students. This reinforces perceptions that successful language learning requires an authentic immersive language context that offers students maximal exposure to the target language, despite research calling into question monolingual instructional strategies (Ballinger, 2013; Cummins, 2017; Dagenais, 2008; Turnbull & McMillan, 2009). Recent research conducted with preservice FSL teachers is showing that only a small number of teacher candidates have encountered conceptual discussions related to ELLs during their teacher education programs (Mady & Arnett, 2015) and that their beliefs about second language (L2) development tend to be inconsistent with research (Arnett & Mady, 2019). In fact, related studies show that for many teacher candidates, an emphasis on French-only instruction is seen as a viable approach to teaching ELLs in French programs, while other FSL teacher candidates are hesitant to view English language learning as even part of their teaching responsibility (Mady, Arnett, & Muilenburg, 2017).

These findings align with the perceptions regularly expressed by the FSL teacher candidates in the TEAL course discussed here, for example, French-only language policies in the classroom and expectations of monolingual

teaching strategies and resources, often based on their own language learning experiences. Mention of strategies that encourage students to look up vocabulary or interact with peers in their first language is often met with puzzlement, and the use of English is seen as more or less taboo. With regard to an emerging teacher identity, my own research has shown that the use of French can serve as a legitimizing means for teachers to demonstrate a position as expert French language teacher, which could be undermined by use of other languages, especially English (Wernicke, forthcoming). Meanwhile, there are also practical considerations that encourage course instructors to insist on French-only classroom interactions. Instructional delivery in French supports teacher candidates' own use of French, for which there is little opportunity in an overwhelmingly English-speaking professional context. Furthermore, course delivery in French constitutes an eligibility criterion for federal and ministry funding specifically targeted to support teacher candidates in specialized FSL teacher education programs. Thus, the French section of the TEAL course is not only taught in French as opposed to English but has to take into account extra ideological, contextual, and practical considerations.

The Course: Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language

The required TEAL course is grounded in multilingual and multiliteracies pedagogies that highlight the situated and culturally specific nature of diverse modes of meaning (The New London Group, 1996) and takes into account language learners' diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds as a significant source of knowledge (Cummins, 2009). Using multilingual approaches means drawing on students' prior knowledge as a learning resource, for example, through translanguaging practices (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; García & Lin, 2017; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012) or the creation and use of multimodal dual language identity texts that valorize students' literacy work in the school language, help connect the school languages to home languages, and affirm student identities in a positive way (Cummins & Early, 2010). It means conceptualizing language as "contextually customized patterns (co-relations) across all levels of grammar that define genres and social languages, as these are integrally connected to socially-situated activities and identities" (Hawkins, 2004, p. 4). The TEAL course was developed out of research conducted over the past several decades in response to the growing linguistic and ethnic diversity of students and their educational needs vis-à-vis English language instruction (e.g., Early, 2001; Early & Tang, 1991; Early, Thew, & Wakefield, 1986; Mohan, Leung, & Davison, 2001). The course introduces teacher candidates to a theoretical overview of the role of language as a medium for learning through the integration of language and content, which has students

“simultaneously learn[ing] both language and subject-matter knowledge in a new sociocultural context” (Early & Marshall, 2008, p. 237). More specifically, it demonstrates grammar and vocabulary learning through listening, speaking, reading, and writing and how to integrate these skills into the teaching of content of school genres.

Grounded in a functional perspective that draws on Halliday’s socio-semiotic theory of language (1978), the concept of register is introduced early on to explain how language use varies across the curriculum according to the context of situation that students encounter both in and outside the classroom (Gibbons, 2015). By studying different school genres (e.g., descriptive, explanatory, procedural, narrative, persuasive), teacher candidates learn to recognize and make use of the contextual elements or register of each text to design relevant language and content teaching activities associated with each genre. These contextual elements are expressed as field, tenor, and mode (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) and refer to the following three dimensions of the text’s production: (a) the ideational dimension or content (what the text is about), (b) the interpersonal dimension or relationship to the text’s audience (who is speaking/writing to whom), (c) the textual dimension or mode in which the text was produced (written, spoken, visual, spatial, etc.). Each of these contextual dimensions is produced through the use of particular language features (such as certain kinds of pronouns, a specific type of verb or adjective, connectors, and so on). It is these features that teacher candidates learn to identify and teach about as key meaning-making resources, which students require to understand subject content and produce their own texts. By making particular linguistic features explicit in this way, teacher candidates become familiar with scaffolding strategies that engage temporary semiotic supports such as key visual representations of content (e.g., Derewianka & Coffin, 2008) or speaking and writing frames to aid students in their use of new language structures and forms to complete an authentic language task. Candidates are encouraged to consider how building vocabulary and familiarity with English text structures and grammatical features can include opportunities for students to relate this L2 knowledge to their first language (L1) experiences, not only to develop cognitive learning but also to affirm their multilingual identities. This requires moving from an “English-only” or “French-only” language policy to one that allows students to use their multilingual resources within the context of classroom activities in a variety of ways—including translating vocabulary words and writing about their experiences in their home language, as well as being permitted to use their L1 to interact with other students.

The course begins by familiarizing teacher candidates with the features of various text genres and then, over the remainder of the course, turns to modelling the curriculum cycle (Gibbons, 2015) that scaffolds students’ learning from text comprehension through to text production. Teacher candidates are guided through the four stages of the cycle: (a) building content knowl-

edge, (b) modelling the text, (c) deconstructing the text, (d) independent writing—using a variety of learning activities and teaching resources. The first assignment has teacher candidates analyzing a selection of school texts, one of which is then used to develop the second assignment—a content-language integrated “rich task.” This subsequent assignment asks teacher candidates to choose a school text, identify the genre, and design accompanying activities that scaffold students’ work with the text (e.g., pre-reading activity, vocabulary learning, character descriptions, etc.) to accomplish the intended content objective of the larger task. Tasks can include presenting a coauthored story, describing how to build a campfire, or explaining the life cycle of an animal, among many others.

Developing Critical Language Awareness: Some Strategies

The strategies presented below attempt to engender critical language awareness among the French teacher candidates that will lead them to recognize the historical context and collective beliefs surrounding standardized official languages, to question and reflect on prevailing cultural knowledge and institutional linguistic norms, and appreciate variation and partiality as inherent features of language learning (Train, 2003). The goal is to provide transformative learning experiences that facilitate “becom[ing] aware of the fact that language produces and reproduces social inequities” and that situate the “teaching self in its broader sociohistorical context” (Chacón, 2009, p. 215). In other words, the focus here is on some of the (un)learning strategies that are used to create a conceptual space for these teacher candidates from which to embrace, with legitimate authority, linguistically and culturally responsive teaching practices in the FSL classroom.

Language Trajectories

To foreground identity and candidates’ own plurilingual practices, the introductory class of the course begins with an activity that asks course participants to visually represent their linguistic knowledge and language learning experiences on a shared poster paper using colouring felt pens. In doing so, they are asked to consider what languages they know and where this knowledge comes from, the kinds of meaning-making activities they are involved in on a daily basis, to what extent the languages they draw on relate to one another, and the values they attribute to different aspects of their linguistic repertoire. This opening activity, thus, allows teacher candidates to visually construct and share their own language learning trajectories or profiles as a way of foregrounding an emphasis on multilingual, multimodal, and multicultural ways of meaning-making. The resulting posters typically feature an array of national flags, icons, and symbols, as well as drawings of school buildings and homes, various landscapes, geographical locations, travel routes, stick figures, and other objects and artifacts. Many also include

descriptions in multiple languages and scripts, musical notes, computer codes, and, once in a while, the odd bits of Klingon. More important, the process of creating the posters and the ensuing presentation and discussion of these has candidates reflect not only on their own bi/plurilingual competencies but on the diverse language resources and experiences represented by the entire class. The visual representations highlight the ideological associations and societal values that are often used to characterize certain kinds of linguistic knowledge—for example, locating French in France as opposed to in Quebec, representing languages as separate entities versus connecting and interweaving representations of linguistic resources as recurring experiences. The discussion also allows me, as the instructor, to point to underlying assumptions and widely held beliefs as candidates' recount their language trajectories, often prompting me to raise further questions for reflection to highlight the visible tensions that arise when we see taken-for-granted perceptions about language failing to align with research-based teaching practices.

Unlearning Monolingualism through Research-Based Reflection

Another way of moving away from persisting monoglossic instructional practices that treat languages as separate entities is to directly address the misconceptions and assumptions preservice teachers bring into teacher education programs through their own experiences as language learners (Bailey et al., 1996; Borg, 2003; Dunn, 2011; Donald Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 1994). This is done by engaging teacher candidates in a collaborative, jigsaw-structured reading and discussion of an article titled “Myths and Misconceptions about Second Language Learning: What Every Teacher Needs to Unlearn” (McLaughlin, 1992)¹. The article touches on five common language myths about additional language acquisition—(a) the critical period hypothesis, (b) beliefs about optimal age, (c) the benefits of immersive settings, (d) conversational versus academic competency, and (e) assumptions about the process of second language learning. A strategic component of this text is that each myth is followed up with a brief overview of associated research specifically geared toward second language teachers that directly challenges “common-sense” assumptions. The discussion not only models the value of consulting research-based knowledge but also prepares class participants to take up similar issues during subsequent classroom discussions in a more informed manner, for example, the “Principles of Teaching ELLs in Mainstream Classrooms” presented in Cummins and Early’s (2015) textbook resource for teaching ELLs across the curriculum. Modelling an orientation to local research is particularly important as these misconceptions continue to surface and need to be revisited throughout the duration of the course. Clarifying conceptual tensions by seeking out relevant research has motivated some teacher candidates to request research related specifically to FSL teaching in

the Canadian context. It has also given those candidates who are themselves second language speakers of French the authority to question native speaker ideologies in relation to their own developing language expertise.

Valuing Multilingualism in the Classroom

Introducing languages other than French or English is done through the modelling of text genres and the first phase of the curriculum cycle, which centers on building students' content knowledge about a particular topic. In the past, I have used the Indigenous storybook *Shi-shi-etko* (Campbell, 2010) to demonstrate building content for a unit about family treasures. As an example of a pre-reading activity, I show the abbreviated film version of the story, produced entirely in Halq'eméylem, the local language of the Stó:lō nation spoken on the Southern West Coast of British Columbia. Watching this short, unsubtitled film in a language that, to date, has been unfamiliar to most teacher candidates can create a new sense of awareness in several ways. It allows course participants to experience the process of making meaning solely based on visual cues, as many ELLs initially do. It also presents an example of a multimodal resource to scaffold students' comprehension during the subsequent reading of the story and can lead to other related pre- or post-reading activities. Finally, it demonstrates multilingual learning through a story that is told in Halq'eméylem (film version) as well as in English and French (book versions). The use and modelling of multiple language texts encourages teacher candidates to later select books for the two course assignments in various combinations (French, English, dual-language, etc.), demonstrating the use and valorization of multiple language resources in the French language classroom, even while discussions and written work mostly occur in French.

Final Thoughts

This article has presented some of the ways in which critical language awareness can be fostered among FSL teacher candidates during a mandated course on TEAL during their teacher education program. The collective awareness of the linguistic resources each class member brings to the course during the opening language profile activity, combined with the presence of multiple languages in course materials and activities, progressively encourage teacher candidates to consider and use students' home languages in the planning of their language tasks. Opening a space for other languages in mainstream classrooms through translated or bilingual texts can foster self-reflection among students' and their peers' use of home languages, ultimately leading to a greater understanding of their own multilingualism as a resource for academic learning (Potts, 2010). It is hoped that this brief article contributes to FSL teacher candidates' continued unlearning of monoglossic language

ideologies in support of heteroglossic language practices (Flores & Bale, 2016), as well as corresponding approaches to assessment (Jared, 2008) in bilingual classrooms, and possibly inspires much-needed research (Camarata, Cavanagh, Blain, & Sabatier, 2018) that attends to the experiences of FSL teacher candidates.

Note

1. Similar “unlearning” discussions include Kubota’s (2018) focus on English language teaching for a Japanese-speaking readership, an analysis of myths and realities about second language learning in French (Roussel & Gaonac’h, 2017), and the initial textbook chapter in *Mapping Applied Linguistics* (Hall, Smith, & Wicaksono, 2017).

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that the work that has gone into this article and the program it describes takes place on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the $x^w m \theta k^w \dot{y} \dot{a} m$ (Musqueam) people. I am grateful to be able to do this work with my colleagues at the University of British Columbia and thank, in particular, Margaret Early for her inspiring leadership in English language learning and teaching and her tireless support for students, teachers, and teacher educators.

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