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How Can Teachers Increase Discipline in Their Classrooms and Deliver a Linguistically and a Culturally Adjusted Education for Diverse Students? A Message for Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers

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Abstract

This paper points out the demographic changes in the American society, which is becoming more and more culturally and linguistically diverse. This demographic shift in society calls for radical changes in the educational system, thus not only mainstream, but all students can be appropriately served in schools. The author connects discipline issues often resulting from the mismatch between the curricula and the type of students they are meant to serve. She also provides recommendations and tools that can enhance teachers' instructional curricula in order for them to serve their students more efficiently and effectively. These tools include, but are not limited to teachers' reflection on themselves and their students from the cultural and societal perspective, incorporation of culturally relevant teaching textbooks and materials, and the inclusion of holistic types of assessment towards all the students. The author strongly believes that incorporating these adjustments can substantially lower discipline problems in the classrooms.

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Introduction

The United States has been a nation of cultural and linguistic diversity, as a result of previous and present waves of immigration, which has changed the nature of education for its citizens and residents. There are approximately 3.5 million learners whose native language is other than English in this country (Chamness, Miller & Endo, 2004). In the last 30 years, there has been a shift in the demographics of the American society from the immigrants of the European descent to the immigrants of the Hispanic descent. The graduation has gradually and substantially grown in diversity. It is predicted that by the year 2035 minority ethnic groups will outnumber students of Caucasian descent (García & Cuéllar, 2006). Latinos are expected to make up 25 percent of the total population of the country by the year 2050 (Suárez-Orozco and Pérez, 2002).

Even though culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students bring an abundance of knowledge to the classrooms, teachers often fail to realize and appreciate this cultural diversity in their classes. They are convinced by their supervisors and lawmakers that the one-size-fits-all curriculum and accountability system is feasible (Hinchey, 2013). That situation is alarming and calls for radical changes in student education, so it can be adjusted to the needs of not only mainstream students, but all students. As Hinchey (2013) quoting Cuban says "...American schools have changed little in over a century" (p. 5). Therefore, I would like to call upon educators to transform a standard/mainstream education, so it can serve not only mainstream students, but CLD students as well. I would like to address you teachers not to look up to what the policy makers and the Department of Education employees will tell you to do, but to work at your teaching level in your local schools and explore what you can personally do in your schools, classrooms, and communities to benefit all students.

What Is the Problem?

The number of CLD teachers do not reflect the numbers of CLD students. Hinchey (2013) mentions that life experiences of students who often come from very different backgrounds, and so experience the world very differently than their teachers, are likely to bring very different assumptions, expectations, and norms to the classrooms. Disproportionally, the majority of teachers in the American schools are white of Anglo descent, which represents traditional educational practices and assumptions (Bradford Smith, 2009). They frequently discount the home language and cultural understanding of CLD students and assume that their needs are the same as that of monolingual students. These practices and assumptions are suitable for mainstream students, who can relate to their teachers who they share the same backgrounds with, but they are inapplicable for CLD students, who are not only linguistically, but also culturally very different from the main

individuals with intellectual disabilities in Seattle, Washington and Boston, Massachusetts areas, and homeless, immigrant, and refugee women with children in Seattle. Ewa obtained her educational experience through receiving Bachelor's degree in American Studies in 2007 and Master's degree in Applied Linguistics, majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language in 2009, both at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. In spring 2015 Ewa conducted a research for three months in Poland observing and interviewing five English as a foreign language public high school teachers focusing on the ways the teachers manifest their pedagogies in developing their students' communicative, and cooperative skills with a particular focus on language production, which resulted in publication of this book. Ewa's interests include multiculturalism, diversity, bilingual education, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), social justice issues, immigration issues and policies, culture, society, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, second language acquisition and the use of technology in the process of teaching and learning. During the years: 2016-2018 Ewa taught developmental English at the College of the Marshall Islands in Majuro, the capital of the Republic of Marshall Islands, South Pacific. Presently, Ewa resides in Seattle, US, where she teaches English to immigrant and refugee speakers of other languages. Check Ewa's other recent publications.

stream population in this country (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008).

Unfortunately, many teachers are unaware of the situation and do not realize what impact mainstream curriculum and mainstream teachers' actions have on the CLD body of students. Numerous teachers are unaware of the value of multicultural and social justice-oriented education in the classrooms. A substantial number of teachers are also not able to differentiate quality scholarly resources and resources that on the surface appear to be quality sources, but in fact they represent a deficit thinking approach towards education, such as self-published Dr. Ruby Payne, whose research is based on stereotypes and many scholars find her representing a classist approach. Valencia (2010) says that Payne in her work provides examples in which she voices deficit thinking and she talks about economically advantaged individuals as if they purposefully created "a culture of poverty." It creates the feeling of alienation, dividedness, isolation, and separation in society. Gorski (2005) believes the educational field accepted her ideas too easily, without the proper critical analysis, as Payne's work is self-published and has not undergone the rigorous peer-review process and screening usually required of professional academics.

What Are the Suggested Solutions for Teachers and Educators?

There are three suggestions proposed in this article to transform mainstream education to education that is linguistically and culturally adjusted. Firstly, teachers are strongly recommended to reflect on their position and a place in society, which you can do by 'internalized dialogue' (Lin, Lake & Rice, 2008, p. 196) with yourselves. Secondly, it is recommended that teachers include texts-books and other educational materials that represent other languages and cultures outside of the Anglophone education. Thirdly, it is recommended that teachers use various types of assessments that are performative and expressive and not linguistically and culturally biased.

Teachers' Reflections

It is commonly known that in most Western countries most teachers and educators are White and English-speaking. The majority of these educators do not share the culture or race of their students (Keyes & Gregg, 2001). "Many teachers, for example, are privileged themselves, and they need first to develop an awareness of their own privilege, a difficult and threatening undertaking..." (Hinchey, 2013, p. 21). In order for you dear teachers to understand and serve the needs of CLD students you need to understand your place and position in society first. For that reason, you need to have inner dialogues with yourselves about reflecting on such aspects as your own cultures and your own ingrained cultural biases. You need to

search deep inside yourselves and ask yourselves who you are from the linguistic, historical, racial cultural, social, and economic points of view and be able to critically reflect on what your position is in this multicultural and multilingual society. You as teachers are also recommended to recognize various aspects of your own culture in relation to the CLD students' position and multidimensional nature of your students' cultures, and schools as institutions. This paper advocates for you to challenge yourselves by regularly asking questions as to whether you create the conditions for all students in terms of fairness, understanding and empathy via your verbal and nonverbal actions.

Unfortunately, much of the “knowledge” possessed about CLD students by teachers is inaccurate and frequently prejudicial. In a study of ethnic stereotyping in news reporting, Campbell (1995) mentions that perpetuation of “myths about life outside of white ‘mainstream’ America contributes to an understanding of minority cultures as less significant, and marginal” (p. 132). Gay (2002) adds “What they [teachers] think they know about the field is often based on superficial or distorted information conveyed through popular culture, mass media, and critics” (p. 107).

I believe that to effectively serve a CLD body of students, you as teachers must recognize your own prejudices, biases, and assumptions that may impact your own teaching practices and ultimately influence your students. It is crucial that you work towards reducing and finally eradicating these biases so you may become efficacious in teaching, gain more knowledge about multicultural education, and be more likely to reach all students. As stated by Hinchey (2013) “School must be sure that not only students of privilege, but also the many children living in poverty, the children who are not native English speakers – all children from divergent backgrounds – receive a quality education that allows them to become “masters of their own economic and social careers”” (Dewey, 1914/1966). The process of recognizing biases and working to remove them should be ongoing. I agree with Paul Gorski, who modeling a teacher’s transformation towards education for CLD students says:

As an educator, I have a dual responsibility to engage in a critical and continual process to examine how my socializations and biases inform my teaching and thus affect the educational experiences of my students. I have a responsibility to myself to examine the lenses through which I understand the people and happenings around me. Only when I have a sense for how my own perceptions are developed in relation to my life experiences will I begin to understand the world and effectively navigate my relationships with the people around me. I also have a responsibility to my students to

work toward eliminating my prejudices, examining who is (and is not) being reached by my teaching, and relearning how my identity affects their learning experiences. To be an effective multicultural educator I must be in a constant process of self-examination and transformation (Gorski, 2010).

There is no doubt that you as teachers need to learn about your students' cultures and learning needs, in order for you to be successful implementers of linguistically and culturally adjusted education and contributors to your students' academic successes. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), it is recommendable that teachers should have formal training in child development, language acquisition, appropriate instructional and assessment techniques, curricular development, parent involvement, and cultural sensitivity (SREB, 1994).

It is commonly known that people learn best from hands-on experiences. Therefore, you should be given opportunities to interact with and teach children who are different from yourselves to learn to appreciate these differences and to become accepting and tolerant of diversity (Lin, Lake & Rice, 2008). Hence, to understand where your CLD students come from, you should visit the communities (churches, immigrant and social organizations, community centers) and families of your CLD students. In this way, you will be able to gain "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69).

Linguistically and Culturally Adjusted Textbooks and Materials
Textbooks and instructional materials need to reflect the body of students in the classrooms so they will all be able to relate to and identify themselves with the book characters. A few years ago, I watched a speech by a Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie. She talks about her younger years when characters of her books were white, had blonde hair, blue eyes, they played in the snow, ate apples, drank tea at five o'clock and talked about the weather and the sun coming out (Adichie, 2009).

This year I read a book by a Tunisian writer Albert Memmi (1965), who describing an educational experience of a Tunisian student in the French school system in Tunisia says, "The book talks to him of a world which in no way reminds him of his own; the little boy is called Toto and the little girl, Marie; and one winter evening Marie and Toto walk home along snow-covered paths, stopping in front of a chestnut vendor" (p. 105).

I also read a book by an Antillean writer and a psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, who points out the mismatch between reading materials designed by the French colonizers and the native Antilleans using them. Fanon (1967) states that the Tarzan stories, the sagas of twelve-year-olds exploring the adventures of Mickey Mouse and all the comic books serve actually for collective aggression, and the magazines are put together by

white men for white men.

One might ask what the African and the Caribbean characters, who grew up in countries colonized and influenced by the British and the French, have in common with CLD students in the United States. It is more than one might think. In the three examples, the education of Nigerians, Tunisians and Antilleans physically colonized in a military sense was channeled to the cultures of Great Britain and France, disregarding the students' native African and Caribbean cultures, and so is education of immigrant students whose minds continue to be colonized through the means of the hegemony of the English language in the United States channeled to the mainstream American culture disregarding immigrant students' ethnic backgrounds and cultures.

The CLD student population is substantial, and it is still growing in this country. The majority of the CLD students are from Latin America and speak Spanish. If they are exposed to mainstream education, where textbooks and instructional materials represent only mainstream characters, values and issues, the students not being able to relate to any of the textbooks and materials will feel a triple D effect – disinterested, disengaged, and disconnected – resulting in loathing, or even hating school, suffering and probably dropping out. The situation is similar to the African and Caribbean characters, who could find no relation between their cultures and the languages represented in the Western educational system they were exposed to in Africa and the Caribbean.

One of the ways to engage CLD students in their own education through relevant teaching materials is tapping into the students' own immigration experiences and thus 'socially construct their learning' (Vygotsky, 1934/1978). One of the ways of doing it is presenting their narratives through the means of graphic stories, which are defined as 'a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person' (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 14). These are also stories in which settled and stable senses of self are unsettled and challenged (Baynham, 2006). Through the means of graphic stories, CLD students will be able to have their identities shaped and then will be a part of discourse that can be a valuable linguistic resource in the classrooms of CLD students (Danzak, 2011). As Danzak notes, the stories also represent memories of shared experiences, family stories, and cultural meaning; they are stories of multiple voices that incorporate the expression of many narrators, both explicit and implicit. CLD students have plenty of such stories to tell and share that can be incorporated into the curriculum. The stories can be used as a vehicle for identity search for CLD students, who will be able to identify themselves with characters of the stories. You, as teachers, can be of tremendous help in the process of your students'

education by assisting them to develop their awareness of graphic stories' power to represent diverse experiences (Boatright, 2010).

In graphic stories, the involvement of family members of CLD students is strongly encouraged. Danzak (2011) mentions that CLD students are welcome to interview their family and community members about their diverse experiences, which can substantially contribute to the richness of the CLD students' graphic stories. The stories then can be compiled and presented at school exhibitions not only to students, teachers and other school agents, but to families, friends, and the communities of the students as well. This collaboration can strengthen the relationships between the CLD students and their peers, people who are close to them, and school. Research demonstrates that parents, teachers, and school administration can accelerate CLD students' learning. There is a correlation between parental involvement and CLD students' better attendance, higher achievement, and improved attitudes about learning and higher graduation rates (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Holistic Assessments

Through home visits and student-parent activities, you as teachers have an opportunity to get to know your CLD students better and obtain a higher chance to successfully help them with their educational needs. This newly gained knowledge will equip you with more advanced skills to evaluate your students in authentic and holistic assessments through which treating students as a whole and checking CLD students' holistic knowledge can provide you a wealth of information about your students, who can have "an opportunity to use their strengths and demonstrate their abilities in different ways" (Pawan & Sietman, 2008, p. 90) this is unlike in standardized tests, which being culturally and linguistically biased, provide mainly information on CLD learners' fragmentary, fractional and out of context knowledge or even lack of knowledge, and not what CLD students learned and what their critical thinking, reading, and writing skills are.

Pawan and Sietman (2008) mention that one of the most important principles in creating successful holistic assessments of CLD students is collaboration between ESL and content teachers, which can help teachers understand the specific needs and differences that CLD learners bring to the content area classrooms. Dieckmann and Montemayor (2004), referring to the collaboration between ESL and content teachers, explain that it is a way of thinking and working with one another that is based on problem solving rather than a stand-and-deliver mode of advising and consulting. Assessments must also measure students' mastery of ESL and content area standards, instead of focusing only on decisions regarding ESL services (Pawan & Sietman 2008).

August and Pease-Alvarez (1996), as cited in Pawan and Sietman (2008), indicate five qualities of sound assessment practices: assessing both content knowledge and English language proficiency, assessing content knowledge and abilities in the first language, using a variety of measures that are more formative in nature, promoting and developing teacher awareness of assessment purposes, and understanding the students' backgrounds.

Research shows that there are also a few accommodations, which can be incorporated into the holistic types of assessment to benefit ESL students, such as detangling academic language contributing to the academic language proficiency (García, Kleifgen & Falchi, 2008). Gotlieb, as cited by García and Kleifgen (2010), points out that academic language proficiency is usually assessed by evaluating the comprehension and use of specialized vocabulary and the language patterns in the spoken and written modes, the linguistic complexity of these modes, and the appropriate use of phonology, syntax, and semantics. Content proficiency is assessed by evaluating whether a CLD learner has actually acquired knowledge of the subject matter. Another accommodation in holistic assessments is transadaptation. García, Kleifgen & Falchi (2008) mention that transadapted texts are created in the home language from the beginning, and are developed and normed for the CLD students. They work to eliminate cultural biases (heavily present in standardized tests) and they have more validity than translations.

Holistic assessments are also realistic ways for CLD students to express what they have learned, as they include a variety of techniques for documenting and assessing the performance of CLD learners in content areas (Pawan and Sietman, 2008). Genishi and Borrego Brainard (1995) point out that holistic assessments "can be oral, written, 'performative', as in dance, or visual/artistic" (p. 54). O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996) add that they include, but are not limited to, oral interviews, writing samples, story or text retelling, exhibitions, projects, experiments and demonstrations, constructed-response items, teacher observations and portfolios.

Conclusion

Gates (2010) expressed very transparently the present state of the education system in this country when he wrote, "Our education system has been fundamental to our success as a nation, but it has barely changed in 100 years" (p. 9). Indeed, it is indisputable that there is an urgency for main stream education to transform as proven by scholars and researchers. In order for a main stream education to become effective education for CLD students, it needs to undergo radical changes. Teachers must become 'reflective practitioners' (National Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998). Brown and Jones (2001) point out that teachers even need to move beyond the notion of the 'reflective practitioner' and

regardless of their attitudes need to become active agents in challenging the present educational system. They must recognize the necessity and priority of education for a CLD population and be equipped to deliver a curriculum that is tailored to the needs of both - Caucasian/ monolingual and CLD students.

Teachers have to reserve time to get to know their CLD students' families better and involve CLD learners' parents in the process of education of their children. Teachers must promote education, which sees flaws and inappropriateness of standardized tests aimed at CLD students, and a pedagogy which values holistic types of assessments towards CLD students, providing a whole picture of CLD students, who can demonstrate what they are capable of, and not what they fail at.

Teachers also need to realize that by incorporating the adjustments into their instructional methods, their profession will become easier and fulfilling. When all students are involved in more "digestible" materials and tasks that will connect with their backgrounds, their past and present, it will incite their curiosity and motivation to learning. Consequently, teachers will have a higher chance of keeping their students involved in their tasks and have less discipline problems if they make their classes more interesting and appealing for all of their students. Teachers will also have a better bonding and connection experience with their students. Through this connection, teachers will respond more enthusiastically and genuinely. There will be less preoccupation with the creation of discipline issues in the classrooms, and consequently the classroom atmosphere will tremendously benefit both - the teachers and all the students.

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