Positioning all Students and Teachers as Intercultural Citizens— A Two-way Adaptation Approach to ELL Identity Negotiation

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Abstract: This article addresses the power imbalance between English language learners (ELL) and native English speakers (NES) in culturally and linguistically diverse K-12 classrooms. Current ELL positioning models explored in empirical research studies are positioned in this article in correlation with the stages in Bennett's theory of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The result indicates that we need an integrative model that equalizes the power relations between ELLs and NES to guide all learners and teachers towards cultural integration. Drawing on positioning theory and the concept of intercultural citizenship, this article proposes an integrative approach of positioning all students and teachers as intercultural citizens as a discursive identity negotiation means to engender an equitable two-way cultural adaption that not only challenges the raciolinguistic ideologies but also builds intercultural citizenship among all learners. A step-by-step school-level practical guide is suggested to implement this integrative approach.

Résumé : Cet article traite du déséquilibre de pouvoir entre les apprenants d'anglais langue seconde et les locuteurs natifs de l'anglais dans les classes culturellement et linguistiquement diversifiées de la maternelle à la 12e année. Les modèles actuels d'anglais langue seconde explorés dans les études de recherche empiriques sont mis en rapport avec les étapes de la théorie de Bennett du modèle développemental de la sensibilité interculturelle. Le résultat indique que nous avons besoin d'un modèle intégratif entre les apprenants de l'anglais langue seconde et les locuteurs natifs afin de les guider vers l'intégration culturelle et le partage du pouvoir. S'appuyant sur la théorie du positionnement et le concept de citoyenneté interculturelle, cet article propose une approche intégrative consistant à positionner tous les élèves et enseignants en tant que citoyens interculturels qui permettront de négocier les discours sur les identités afin

d'engendrer une adaptation culturelle équitable à double sens. De cette façon, non seulement on remet en question les idéologies raciolinguistiques, mais on construit également la citoyenneté interculturelle parmi tous les apprenants. Un guide pratique, étape par étape, pour les institutions scolaires, est suggéré pour mettre en œuvre cette approche intégrative.

Introduction

Teaching is an art. To Gadamer (1960/2004), the experience of art is an experience of meaning. Hence, the experience of teaching is, in Gadamerian sense, an experience of meaning brought about by the reciprocal understanding between the students and the teacher, or a fusion of the learners' and the teacher's horizons. However, as the student population becomes more and more culturally and linguistically diverse in the major English-speaking immigrant countries, the art of teaching—the reciprocal meaning-making between the learners and the teacher—is getting more complex than ever in the K-12 public systems in these countries. In a culturally and linguistically homogeneous classroom, a teacher could follow *the golden rule*: "Do onto others what you would have done onto you"—teach students the way *I* would like to be taught. The way I want to be taught is also significantly mediated and constituted by my own "historically affected consciousness" (Gadamer, 1960/2004)—the way I have been taught by the family, prior schooling, and the community. In other words, when there is enough similarity between the historically affected consciousness of the teacher and the learners, the golden rule often renders teaching effective; However, in a diverse classroom where cultural and linguistic plurality disrupts and dismantles the taken-for-granted predictability, the golden rule is much less helpful. A teacher's well-intentioned efforts to engage English language learners (ELLs) may sometimes position ELLs in awkward ways and be resisted by them (Duff, 2002). A more effective alternative is to apply *the platinum rule*—treat others the way *they* want to be treated (Castiglioni & Bennett, 2018)—to teaching: teach ELLs the way *they* want to be taught, or at least be cognizant of what that is.

Buying into the platinum rule requires, first and foremost, an epistemological shift from ethnocentrism towards ethnorelativism (Bennett, 2013b) and the appropriation of the 'inside-out perspective' from the racialized bilingual communities (García,

2021) among educators and all learners. More specifically, the prerequisites for the enactment of the platinum rule entail: (a) the teacher's critical examination of "the raciolinguistic ideologies and the White listening object" (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 187) which implies that ELLs should conform to White social and linguistic norms (Ladson-Billings, 2017); (b) the teacher's critical awareness that ELLs' cultural and linguistic repertoires are valuable assets for their discursive meaning-making (Kramsch & Zhu, 2016) and knowledge construction; and (c) a repositioning of the ELLs that would not only allow their social and linguistic capital to be perceived as affordances (Darvin & Norton, 2015) in the eyes of both the teachers and the students including the ELLs themselves, but also interrogate the orders of indexicality that subject this capital to value systems that reflect the macro sociocultural habitus (Blommaert, 2010).

There has been flourishing scholarship that addresses the first two prerequisites over the past two decades, promoting the assets-based pedagogies for the minoritized students and challenging the deficit gaze. Yet much less literature has targeted on the third one explicitly. This paper proposes an integrative approach of positioning all students and teachers as intercultural citizens as a discursive identity negotiation means to facilitate the enactment of the platinum rule and to engender an equitable and productive two-way intercultural adaption (Bennett, 2013b). It draws upon the positioning theory (Harré, 2012) and the concept of intercultural citizenship (Castiglioni & Bennett, 2018) as well as the author's own teaching experience as a humanities and ELL teacher in ethnolinguistically diverse classrooms in Alberta, Canada. This approach will not only challenge the raciolinguistic ideologies but also build intercultural citizenship among all learners. The latter is becoming ever more crucial, albeit undervalued in the mainstream curriculum, in face of increasingly interconnected global challenges such as the pandemic which necessitate global solidarity and stewardship.

In the ensuing sections, I first elucidate the conceptual framework, then discuss the rationale for this approach by delineating the ELL positioning models along Bennett's (2013b) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) continuum. After explicating *what* and *how* of this proposed approach, I conclude with a reflection on its potential limitations and future empirical research suggestions.

Conceptual Framework

Following Canagaraja's (2016) call for TESOL to be a community of practices that will always borrow from and appropriate diverse theoretical discourses to stay responsive to the evolving social and scholarly contexts, I frame my proposed pedagogical approach based on the positioning theory (Harré, 2012) from social-cultural psychology and the concept of intercultural citizenship (Castiglioni & Bennett, 2018) from intercultural communications.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory develops from Vygotsky's (1978) conception that a person's cultural development first appears on the social level, then on the individual level (Harré, 2008). Harré (2012) defines the positioning theory as "the study of the discursive processes by which people were ascribed, took up, refused, contested, and so on the rights and duties they found themselves with in the local social world" (p. 195). Its founding principle is that people involved in social interactions have unequal access to rights and duties to perform meaningful social actions. This conceptual tenet is in line with Bourdieu's (1977) dictum that what to say and how to say it on a given occasion relies on the positionings of the interactants in accordance with the distribution of linguistic and other sorts of capital. Three background conditions constitute the positioning triangle: positions, actions and acts, storylines (Harré, 2012). Any positioning is local and ephemeral, hence can be challenged. A change in positioning changes the meaning of the actions which in turn modifies the storylines (Harré et al., 2009).

Identity researchers who subscribe to social constructivist epistemology have theorized cultural identity as a positioning which is always in process (Block, 2013; Duff, 2012; Hall, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2011). This identity-as-position metaphor allows for the doing of identity (Moje & Luke, 2009). More specifically, the conception of positional identities recognizes possibilities of mediating human agency (Holland & Leander, 2004) to self-construct and represent the narrativizing of identity (Moje & Luke, 2009). The taken-for-granted aspects of positional identities can be ruptured from automatic recognition to re-cognition (Holland et al., 1998). This is an empowering concept for ELLs in the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. The taken-for-granted binary positioning of ELL/NES identity disempowers ELLs for an attribute ELLs have no control of, nor do they have any experience in their prior storylines that could be drawn upon to reposition themselves.

It is liberating to envision that this deficit-based positioning is not fossilized and can be disrupted with pedagogical interventions.

Starting in the mid-90s, in tune with the Vygotskian theoretical root of the positioning theory, SLA research using Vygotskian sociocultural theory started to see language learners as "differentially-positioned members of social and historical collectivities" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 419). A decade after, SLA researchers turned to positioning theory as an analytic lens to illuminate the interactional and power dynamics in the language learning classrooms and how the positioning of the ELLs facilitates or impedes their learning in these discourses (e.g. Menard-Warwick, 2008; Yoon, 2008; De Costa, 2011; Kayi-Aydar, 2014). Turner et al. (2013) conducted a study that investigated how discursive positioning could provide affordances to ELLs to take on agentive problem-solving roles in group mathematical discussions. The findings suggest that strategically positioning ELLs as competent learners and their ideas as justified support positive mathematical identity development. The promising results of this study indicate that, other than being an analytic lens, the positioning theory can also be harnessed to effect social justice changes in the classrooms.

Unlike the other social theories, such as symbolic interactionalism and discourse analysis, that emphasize on how discourse organizes positions, positioning theory assumes that power dynamics is subsumed within the framework of rights and duties (Warren & Moghaddam, 2018). As such, I postulate that collaborative power relations between ELLs and NES can be fostered by discursively ascribing all teachers and learners an intercultural identity that is premised on equity, reciprocity, and rights and duties. I choose the concept of intercultural citizenship as the target positional identity.

Intercultural Citizenship

There are two distinctly oriented constructs of intercultural citizenship from two different disciplines—Byram's (2008) intercultural citizenship education model from the field of foreign language teaching and Castiglioni and Bennett (2018)'s concept of intercultural citizenship from intercultural communications. The former focuses on learning outcomes as opposed to development (Byram et al., 2017); In contrast, the latter is process-oriented, which is commensurable with the situated, dynamic property of the positioning theory.

For the proposed positioning approach, I employ Castiglioni and Bennett (2018)'s concept of intercultural citizenship (IC) defined as "the conscious identification with and acceptance of responsibility for participating in one or more cultural boundary conditions that define groups of people who are coordinating meaning and action" (p. 229). It advocates for three building capacities: (a) intercultural empathy which engages in overcoming the golden rule and embracing the platinum rule; (b) mutual adaptation to generate virtual third cultures; and (c) intercultural ethicality which demands empathic perspective-taking. Common to both positioning theory and Castiglioni and Bennett's IC concept are the centrality of rights and responsibilities and the prioritizing of what we *do* over what we *have*. The combination of these two constructs can create powerful pedagogical affordances in the diverse classrooms to effect equitable two-way intercultural adaptation between the ELLs and NES.

Rationale for an Integrative Positioning Approach

Generations of researchers have endeavored to search for the effective ways to promote academic achievement among ELLs. Powerful assets-based approaches, including culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), heteroglossic language ideologies (Flores & Schissel, 2014), translanguaging (García & Li Wei, 2014), translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2018), plurilingualism (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020), cultural reciprocity (Li, 2021), and collaborative power relations (Cummins, 2001, 2015), to name a few, have revolutionized the English language teaching theories and pedagogies towards heteroglossia, inclusion, and social justice.

However, a concerning teacher-student disconnect was found in Sharkey's (2018) 5-year study investigating the factors that impact in-service teacher learning in a multi-year professional development program. The study revealed that these asset-based approaches "did not explicitly address the nature of inter-group interactions and relationships" (p. 577) in the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Despite strong uptake of assets-based, social justice perspectives, the majority of teachers were still positioned as the experts. In other words, the golden rule still prevailed. Sharkey calls for an integration of intercultural citizenship competencies into the teacher education program serving in-service teachers. This is resonant with Fullan and

Langworthy's (2013) proposed notion of teachers and students as learning partners for their vision of "new pedagogies for deep learning". One of their proposed deep learning goals is citizenship which entails global knowledge and sensitivity to other cultures.

Furthermore, notwithstanding a considerable increase of research interest in examining the impact of positioning processes on ELL student participation and identity construction in diverse classrooms (Kayi-Aydar & Miller, 2018), little literature has offered pedagogical practices that explicitly address the power dynamics between ELLs and NES peers. Majority of the assets-based approaches, including Cummins's (2001, 2015) concept of coercive vs collaborative power relations, center on the relationship between the teachers and ELLs while relegating the power dynamics between ELLs and NES peers. I strongly concur with Norton (2000, 2010) that the lack of investment among many silent ELLs in the classroom can be attributed to the unequal relations of power with NES peers. That is, ELLs, with a perceived lack of understanding in the language and socio-cultural norms, are often less valued and respected than their NES peers in a classroom, which results in ELLs feeling marginalized or overlooked, leading to a lack of confidence and a reluctance to participate in classroom activities. For example, ELLs may be singled out by teachers for correction leading to a sense of being "othered"; In group projects, NES may overlook or exclude ELLs from discussions and activities. Hence, it is vital for educators to explore identity positions that maximize learner engagement and interaction. When the power relation between ELLs and NES remains unequal, even the most equity- and assets-minded teacher may not be able to break the silence of the ELLs because "silence protected them from humiliation" (Duff, 2002, p. 312). A repositioning of the problematic ELL/NES identity is essential to complement the assets-based pedagogies in equalizing the power relation between ELLs and NES peers.

To further illustrate the issue and to shed light on the type of repositioning that needs to be in place in the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, I use Bennett's (2013a) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) to diagnose and position the ELL positioning models explored in empirical research studies in correlation with DMIS stages. The DMIS positions six distinct kinds of intercultural experience spread across a continuum from ethnocentrism represented by avoidance of cultural difference (denial, defense, minimization) to ethnorelativism represented by the seeking of the experience of

cultural difference (acceptance, adaptation, integration). Table 1 delineates these positioning models, their respective DMIS stages, and impact on ELLs.

Table 1. Models of ELL Positioning in Correlation with DMIS Stages

DMIS Stages	Minimization Minimizing the importance of difference	Acceptance Accepting the importance of difference	Adaptation Taking different perspectives into account	Integration Integrating the experience into one's identity
ELL Positioning Model	Assimilative Treating ELLs the same as NES, apathetic to the unique needs of ELLs Attributing ELL's lack of investment in learning to laziness and poor attitudes	Deficient Recognizing the different linguistic needs of ELLs, but unresponsive to their unique social and cultural needs Perpetrating a deficient perspective on ELL's learning abilities	Affirmative Embracing cultural and linguistic diversity as assets for all learners May still be subject to raciolinguistic ideologies and White gaze	Integrative ELLs as integral and valuable members of the learning community A joint responsibility of ELLs and NES to adapt to each other
Impact on ELLs	Denial of ELLs' linguistic needs setting them up for academic failure ELLs blamed for underachievement in an 'equal' learning environment	Coercive power relations resulting in lack of engagement and investment in learning ELLs blamed for underachievement with differentiated instruction	Enhanced ELL investment in solo learning activities that are culturally responsive Oral participation and interaction remains low due to coercive power relation with peers	Enhanced ELL investment in all learning activities that are culturally responsive Mutually empowering growth in a virtual third culture
Power Relations	Coercive with both teachers and NES peers	Coercive with both teachers and NES peers	Collaborative with teachers Coercive with NES peers	Collaborative with both teachers and NES peers
Research Studies	Reeves, 2009 Yoon, 2008	Kim & Viesca, 2016 Protacio, 2019	Takeuchi, 2021 Turner et al., 2013	N/A
	Deficit-based ← → Assets-based			

Note. This table does not include the first two ethnocentric stages—denial and defense of the DMIS as these two are not representative in the recent classroom studies. The list of research studies is not intended to be

exhaustive, but rather to represent contemporary scholarship that is impactful in core subject areas.

As shown in the table, we are still in need of an integrative positioning model to guide all students and teachers towards the stage of cultural integration wherein people integrate intercultural competence into identity construction—an approach that fosters what Sharkey (2018) calls "learning with the Other rather than about the Other" (p. 577).

The Integrative Approach: Positioning Everyone as Intercultural Citizens

Hinging on the preceding rationales, I propose that schools deliberately position all learners and teachers as intercultural citizens thereupon initiating a two-way intercultural adaptation process in which everyone shares a joint responsibility to mentor others and be mentored on intercultural competence. When both ELLs and NES are positioned as intercultural citizens in culturally and linguistically diverse schools, everyone is assigned (a) civic responsibility to enact the platinum rule and engage in intercultural learning and adaptation; and (b) civic rights for "legitimate integral participation", which affirms and capitalizes on the ELLs' pluricultural and plurilinguistic funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005), in contrast to the concept of "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) which posits that ELLs have to start from positions with limited participation towards more fuller participation.

Positioning everyone as intercultural citizens is not imposing a unitary and homogenous identity. Rather, it is premised on the value of cultural difference and harness it for mutual empowerment and development. "Strategic essentialism" (Spivak, 1996) has been harnessed by some groups to reclaim cultural and linguistic solidarity. I contend that it can also be harnessed as a tactic to unite intercultural citizens that transcend ethnic and national boundaries. If identity is always constructed through splitting between the self and the Other (Hall, 1997), let us co-construct an intercultural identity through splitting between the ethnorelative, integrative us and the ethnocentric, segregated Other.

School-level Implementation of the Integrative Approach

According to Harré et al (2009), positioning may proceed in sequential phases. The pre-positioning is the discursive process to

ascribe candidate status for a position based on explicit evidence. The second-order positioning is to have a position acknowledged implicitly or explicitly. The third-order positioning is to "have a footing" where the position turns into a 'right' and entitlement (p. 12).

Following this positioning process, the school-level implementation can be achieved through the following steps:

1. Administrators and teachers use professional learning development to engage in critical self-reflection and evaluation of their own capacities for intercultural empathy in teaching, followed by a critical self-examination of their own instructional practices in reference to the ELL positioning models in Table 1. Be ready to embrace the platinum rule and position themselves as intercultural citizens.

2. Administrators and teachers collectively examine the school culture and power dynamics to pinpoint the most relevant intercultural citizenship capacities for their own learning context. Effecting change in classrooms is the most effective when nurturing "effectual practices that are indigenous to our particular contexts" (Hall, 2000, p. 295) as "context is everything" when it comes to successful implementation of educational innovation (Fullan, 2006, p. 116).

3. Promote intercultural citizenship to students using multimodal and semiotic mediators that can include, but not limited to, IC passport, flag, exam, anthem, slogans, posters, and social media tidbits; Position all learners as intercultural citizens thereby assigning agency, ownership, and accountability to all learners, especially the NES students, to partake in the two-way intercultural adaptation.

4. Teachers model and facilitate intercultural empathy and the platinum rule by (a) involving community and students in the curriculum development and lesson planning, and (b) integrating the plurilingual and pluricultural funds of knowledge from the learning community in culturally sustaining way. For example, teachers may conduct surveys with families and

community members, making sure to include the culturally marginalized and/or silenced, to gather input on the topics and materials that are most culturally relevant and engaging for their students. Additionally, teachers may incorporate student feedback and suggestions into lesson plans, creating opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning and feel more invested in the educational process.

Emphasis should be placed on how students make meaning of and form perspectives in the learning contexts. Transcending the ethnocentrism of a single cultural perspective is an essential component of intercultural thinking (Bennett, 2013b). As such, teachers should model and train students to be mindful of the particular identity position(s) they bring into these learning interactions, be aware of and alert to parochial and ethnocentric thought and behavior and be ready to reposition themselves.

5. Once learners start embodying the concept of intercultural citizenship in their learning interactions, deliberate self-positioning as intercultural citizens can be facilitated across the disciplines to sustain and propel the momentum.

In doing so, the following outcomes can be potentially attained:

- It will transform the hierarchical power relationship between NES and ELLs into a collaborative and constructive third space. This third space, or in Bennett's (2013b) term, "third culture", emerges when culturally distinct people engage in mutual adaptation. It should not be understood as a mere assemblage of the two original cultures; Rather, it involves a complex meta-coordination of meaning (Bennett, 2013b).

- It will boost learning investment among all learners as everyone's cultural/linguistic repertoire and trajectory of life experiences are taken as assets and valuable learning resources.

It is a special motivator for learners when they believe they are contributing something to others (Bransford et al., 2004).

- It will develop intercultural citizenship and intercultural competencies essential for life and career success in the 21st century, which can be a practical and valuable investment in one's personal and professional development.
- It will facilitate intercultural empathy and ameliorate ethnocentric parochialism among all members, both NES and ELLs, leading to a more harmonious and synergetic school culture where students are more likely to approach conflicts with empathy and respect, rather than fear and hostility. In so doing, students can also become better equipped to tackle global issues and work collaboratively with individuals from diverse backgrounds in their future careers and personal lives, which can ultimately lead to more global solidarity and cooperation.

A caveat to keep in mind is that this intercultural approach cannot and should not substitute the language skill-based instructions that are already in place or should be employed to meet the unique linguistic needs of ELLs. Doing so would be a regression to the minimization stage of the DMIS. Instructional practices and strategies designed to support content teachers in teaching disciplinary literacy to ELLs (e.g. Lou, 2020) should remain at the forefront. This article serves to complement a sociocultural dimension to the cognitive and linguistic dimension of literacy interventions for ELLs and other culturally minoritized learners, and as such, to maximize the effects of the latter.

Challenges and Limitations

It must be acknowledged that there may be foreseeable challenges of implementing this approach as with any other pedagogical innovation. While this two-way adaptation approach does not demand revolutionary transformation in teaching practices but rather a mindset shift from viewing ELL learning as assimilative towards an openness to positioning themselves as intercultural co-learners, resistance from educators can be anticipated. Literature

has noted the significant challenges of training teachers in intercultural competence and in teaching it (Holmes, 2014), which can be attributed to a lack of support in curricula, textbooks, and materials (Byram, 2014) and teachers' perceiving it as an extra burden on their strained workload (Porto, 2019). But the underlying psychological mechanism causing resistance to pedagogical change might be what Maslow (1962) coined "fear of knowing" which is manifested in two types of resistance—resistance to any knowledge that could make us feel inferior and weak and resistance to personal growth that can beget feelings of weakness and inadequacy. Maslow asserted that only when one's basic needs for safety and respect are met can one dare to explore the unknown and grow, and a cognitive way to cope with the "threatening" unknown is to understand them.

In light of Maslow's insights, the key to proactively mitigating educator resistance is to create a safe, caring, and respectful environment wherein everyone feels safe, respected and their fears/anxieties are accepted respectfully, not shamed. This means teachers should be *nudged*, rarely *pushed*. Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) defined *nudge* in the discourse of education reform as "a way to enable people to make choices but to try and guide them a bit at a time into making better ones" (p. 39). To nudge, key terms such as "intercultural citizens" and "mutual adaptation" should be repeated and reinforced as daily communicative vocabulary; inspiring signs and posters should be saliently visible in each classroom; periodic critical reflection and experience sharing need to be incorporated into both teaching and PD praxis; struggling teachers can be buddied up with more experienced colleagues; most importantly, there needs to be sustaining PD support that is designed in consultation with the teachers and PD time for teachers to reflect and collaborate with colleagues.

Apart from challenges, it is equally important to acknowledge the limitations of this integrative approach. While grounded in multidisciplinary theories and drawn on the author's own ELL teaching experiences, it remains to be corroborated by empirical research studies. More detailed curricular resources will also need to be developed to support and guide teachers in classroom implementation of the approach. As online communication gains an increasingly dominant role in ELLs' social life, questions such as how an intercultural citizenship identity manifests and interacts with virtual identities in social media and video game communities are yet to be explored.

Conclusion

This article proposes a new pedagogical practice of positioning all learners and teachers as intercultural citizens as an integrative two-way adaption approach to mediate the power imbalance between ELLs and NES. Given the messiness and multifarious contingencies of the ecology in the ethnolinguistically diverse classrooms, it would be facile, of course, to claim that this integrative approach could eradicate the inequalities ELLs are subject to. But it is important to have a vision in sights with an intercultural mindset and a practical GPS in place to help us navigate towards intercultural integration. This paper takes an incipient step towards creating the practical GPS with the hope that more will follow in our collective endeavors to creating intercultural school culture that are premised on respect, equity, and collaborative power relations.

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