Mosaic
The newsletter of the New York State TESOL Association

Foreword

Dear Readers:

In this third edition of the newsletter there are some articles based on presentations from the 51st Annual Conference as well as two regular articles, one by Yana Shifrina-Piljovin touching on beliefs and issues with heritage language maintenance and another from Margaret Ibrasco describing an activity to foster interaction and collaboration in a virtual speaking class. Of the articles dedicated to the conference Robert Niewiadomski uses autoethnography to investigate his encounters with white fragility, while Julie O'Connor provides an abundance of resources to teach English through teaching kindness to animals. Lastly, Jasmin Cowin describes her poster presentation that codifies and collects virtual reality resources for teachers to use to up the ante for their students in content-based, project-based or task-based language learning.

Though these are only a few of the possible presentations that will be on view from November 4-6 at the conference, they and the regular articles represent the breadth of knowledge, dedication, and insight that our educators have to offer but that often is taken for granted in our daily grind to support our students' learning. At MOSAIC, it is part of our mission to highlight and cheer the contributions of educators like these. And it is with that in mind, that the editors and I hope to publish more of your work and hard-earned insights in upcoming editions.

In keeping with that hope, please do not hesitate to check out the submission guidelines or send us an email with questions at mosaic@nystesol.org.

Always,

Genie Smiddy

Editor in Chief, *MOSAIC* NYS TESOL

Identity and Liberation

This is an ongoing column that features the exploration of marginalized identities and strategies for countering oppression in our field and focuses on the intersection of English Language Teaching and one or more aspects of students' and educators' identities. Please send article submissions to the column editor, Timothy Foran, LIM College at mosaic@nystesol.org

51st Annual Conference

Grappling With White Fragility: A TESOL Teacher's Autoethnographic Inquiry

Robert Niewiadomski

Through most of my professional life, I have eluded encounters with my racialized self. This mini-inquiry examines my relationship with whiteness as a white TESOL teacher working with minoritized students. Specifically, I sought to address two main questions: (1) How do I, as a TESOL teacher, experience whiteness? (2) How does working with minoritized students challenge my white positionality?

I applied analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) as the principal method in my investigation. Analytic autoethnography is a qualitative approach that places the researcher at the center of cultural analysis within a given context. The strategy aims to understand social phenomena by examining data from the researcher's own life story through a theoretical lens.

Why is it important for TESOL teachers such as myself to examine our positionalities and identities? To appreciate this question, we must consider our role within the educational ecosystem. First, TESOL educators are not mere instructors of a language. Our social and cultural role in the learning process places us at the intersection of language, identity, agency, and power (Lewis et al., 2007). Second, we exert control through discourses, relationships, and activities (Lewis et al., 2007). Third, TESOL teachers who are white should examine how whiteness operates in the power structure and how it shapes their positionalities (Hearn, 2012). Thus, being a TESOL teacher entails engaging with systems of power, and we should be able to account for our position within them. By confronting oppressive structures and their legacy, we may advance our commitment to the cause of social justice.

Whiteness as a Social Construct

Race, gender, class, and nationality are socially constructed categories. Our membership in any combination of these categories determines our position in the societal system of power. Whiteness occupies a special place in these power structures. Researchers recognize that whiteness is not merely about skin tone but is a set of practices that construct and normalize a system of privilege (Applebaum, 2016). Furthermore, by studying whiteness' malleability, scholars demonstrate the conditional nature of whiteness. Italians, Irish, and Jews are examples of European-based ethnic groups that have *become* white in American society by moving towards the center of privilege and negating what lies outside its borders (Brodkin, 1998; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2018).

Whiteness maintains its dominant yet invisible position through social mechanisms that create and reproduce white supremacy and white privilege (Applebaum, 2016). White supremacy refers to the prevailing system of belief and practices whereby white interests and perceptions dominate everyday life and are taken for granted as a set of norms (Gillborn, 2006). Further, as McIntosh (2019) points out, white privilege is analogous to an invisible knapsack of unearned assets that white people enjoy every day but do not realize they have. Such unmerited advantage is concealed by white supremacy's comprehensive *epistemology of ignorance* (Sullivan & Tuana, 2012). This ignorance is not simply a lack of knowledge but a refusal to understand and acknowledge the very existence of the institutional privilege itself (Sedgwick, 2008).

Accordingly, as white dominance and privilege are internalized, implicit, and invisible, whites rarely confront any serious challenge to their status. DiAngelo (2011) claims that such an absence of challenges to white dominance leads to a low stamina level to race-induced stress among whites. When faced with even slight racial pressure, whites tend to display heightened sensitivity, which DiAngelo calls *white fragility*. Such state results in a range of defensive emotional, and behavioral reactions, including anger, fear, guilt, argumentation, silence, or avoidance (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57).

Practicing Invisible Whiteness

Whiteness consists of cultural practices rather than a static condition (Frankenberg, 1993). As with gender, whiteness is performative (Butler, 1993). Whiteness emerges

through acts of ritualized production. Furthermore, whiteness is unmarked and unnamed, and as such, it is invisible even to its practitioners (Frankenberg, 1993). I have practiced such invisible whiteness for most of my life. Like Molière's Mr. Jourdain, who spoke prose his entire life without realizing it, I also grew up white without grasping that I was re-enacting a particular race. What factors made it possible for me to do so? The answer to this question requires me to examine some aspects of my biography.

I spent my formative years in Poland, a country with a complicated history of racism. As recently as the middle of the 19th century, white peasants living in servitude were literarily considered a different race by the privileged classes. In the 18th century, Western travelers who visited Poland could not distinguish between the predicament of the serfs and the chattel slavery in America. Remarkably though, the horrors of serfdom have almost entirely vanished from collective memory, even though most Poles can trace their ancestry back to manorial bondage. Moreover, both serfs and the privileged alike viewed the Polish Jews as an entirely different race.

World War II and the following communist regime fundamentally transformed and homogenized Polish society, but racism mutated and endured. Ostensibly, whiteness became the property of all Poles as an unmarked and privileged category. The term *race* essentially became taboo in polite society as it evoked memories of Nazism. Nevertheless, while Polish Jews almost entirely perished during the Holocaust, an undercurrent of antisemitism and xenophobia persisted, fueled by right-wing nationalism combined with Catholic fundamentalism. Over the last several decades, the pre-war dehumanization of Jews has gradually transferred to the LGBTQ community. It was not uncommon to hear people call me emasculating and racialized slurs such as "fag Jew." Such incidents of violence sparked my suspicion that whiteness was contingent and malleable. The privileged status I took for granted suddenly became questioned and ultimately stripped away by a simple act of branding as the *other*.

Triggering White Fragility

Later in my life, as a TESOL educator in the U.S., I found myself pondering the role of white privilege in my professional field more often. However, as an immigrant, I did not perceive it as also *my* problem. I did not entirely own up to it as a person benefiting

from the systemic structures that nurture and sustain it. Instead, I looked at it the way my elite education trained me to—from the "objective" point of view. I contemplated white privilege not as a living experience but rather as an external object of intellectual knowledge. I was still oblivious to the reality that what allowed me to maintain my objective and insulated contemplation was the invisibility of my whiteness and the privilege that it conferred.

Over the many years of my work with minoritized multilingual English learners, my whiteness came up several times in the context of student questions—"Why almost all teachers here are white?" Most of these times, it led to a discussion on representation and power imbalance in many urban schools as a systemic problem. Occasionally, a student would express a preference for a "white" or an "American" teacher, often used interchangeably, because "they teach better English." This type of question posed a more challenging problem of addressing endemic native-speakerism. In this language ideology, only "native" speakers are the legitimate repositories of English and the most pedagogical authority (Holliday, 2006).

My race as a teacher in a class of minoritized students came up again in one of my recent English units on social justice. In the context of a discussion on equity, a student casually asked, "And what are you?" "What exactly would you like to know about me?" I replied, slightly puzzled. "What race are you?" asked the student. "As far as I am concerned, it would be difficult to dispute that I am not white," I said facetiously. I was surprised that the student would ask me to acknowledge the obvious. I also suspected that the student was confused about race or ethnicity or perhaps intended to put me on the spot. "White? But you are not an American. You are not from here. Right? You don't have a white accent. So what are you?" the student continued. "This could be confusing and complicated. Let's try to unpack it together." I had no intention of simplifying the issue or becoming defensive in the face of the student's brilliant insight into the construction of racial categories. However, I was not able to offer any coherent explanation that would address the student's intuitions. Why was this so difficult?

As I later recalled my lesson, I felt disappointed by my inability to address questions on the spot. Although I was not a stranger to discussing whiteness as a profoundly problematic category, others challenging my claim to whiteness brought about a

subliminal feeling of discomfort that took some time to understand. I felt intensely conflicted. Did I feel anxious because the dehumanization that I experienced previously also attempted to strip me from the comfort of the invisible cloak of whiteness? Did I feel distressed because questioning my whiteness also challenged my pedagogical suitability as a TESOL teacher? Did I feel marginalized as a foreign-born individual whose legitimacy as an "authentic" American was in doubt? Perhaps all of the above. Despite all my reservations about whiteness, suddenly, I felt negligible, peripheral, precarious, and an imposter.

It occurred to me that the trigger for white fragility may come from unexpected sources. My response had nothing to do with the reaction to the perceived attack on whiteness itself, as described in some scholarly literature (Bonilla-Silva, 2021; DiAngelo & Dyson, 2020).

Instead, it appears that my whiteness accounted for a large portion of my self-worth. It was not the questioning of whiteness in general that awakened deep-seated doubts and insecurities. It was the challenge to *my* whiteness that unsettled me and stirred my incertitude as a *(non)native speakered* TESOL teacher (Aneja, 2016). Moreover, it brought to the surface my subliminal feeling of inferiority and the suppressed sense of belonging to *marginal* whiteness so familiar among some subsets of whites, such as women, gays, the poor, or emigrants from peripheral European nations (Gear Rich, 2010; Tereshchenko et al., 2019). Since the whole experience of whiteness that marginal whites envision is that of a white, non-ethnic, middle-class, heterosexual male, any divergence from that paragon is a potential source of anxiety (Gear Rich, 2010). The most notable modifiers that influence the experience of whiteness by marginal whites are gender, ethnicity, class, sexual preference, or religion. Moreover, the presence of these modifiers pulls back the veil of white invisibility, making the racial experience of individuals in marginalized categories more palpable (Gear Rich, 2010).

(In)conclusion

An autoethnographic inquiry assumes the subject has unmediated direct knowledge of him or herself. That is not necessarily the case. The method can provide only tentative answers. The insights gained are, to a significant degree, a construction. The outcomes

are subject to revision in a recursive process. In short, they are never finite, and in some way, they are inconclusive. Likewise, I do not present my inquiry as a definitive account of my experience. Instead, it is an attempt to make sense of my experience to inspire others to go on a similar journey.

Manifestations of white fragility can range from severe to very subtle. For example, a bill recently passed in Tennessee bans from state curricula any content that would make an individual "feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or another form of psychological distress solely because of the individual's race or sex" (TN General Assembly, 2021). The legislators placed this prohibition alongside "Promoting or advocating the violent overthrow of the United States government" (TN General Assembly, 2021). Tennessee lawmakers equated causing white discomfort with a subversive act of magnitude comparable to an insurrection. Their legislation is an example of white anxiety at its most acute. White fragility, however, does not always manifest itself in such extreme ways. Often, it takes on indirect forms, but it is nonetheless insidious. Progressive-oriented and culturally-conscious white teachers who work with minoritized students are not impervious to it either.

In my inquiry, I sought to show how my socio-cultural origins contributed to the practice of invisible whiteness. I spent my formative years in a society that practiced whiteness in opposition to racialized others. White privilege was normalized and invisible to those who benefited from it. Furthermore, I endeavored to understand how suggestions of my marginal whiteness by my students triggered a form of white fragility. Conversations with minoritized students revealed the perception of the provisional status of my whiteness. This realization stirred deep-seated doubts and insecurities related to my subliminal feeling of inferiority as an emigrant from Eastern Europe and a (non)native speakered TESOL teacher.

As an autoethnographic researcher grappling with my whiteness, I must also confront the paradox of placing it at the center of the inquiry. Some might argue such a strategy reinforces white supremacy by deflecting attention away from minoritized and oppressed groups and focusing on my emotions, interests, and experiences of whiteness instead. However, would it be viable and acceptable to examine my positionality without also examining my whiteness? Any attempt to conduct my auto-examination

from a "neutral" perspective would be inauthentic. Furthermore, it would reinforce one of white supremacy's tenets that white people speak for everyone.

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51st Annual Conference

Teaching English by Teaching Kindness to Animals

Julie O'Connor, PhD

Students, regardless of culture, are motivated to learn when animals, and specifically protecting animals, are the focus of your lessons (O'Connor, 2018). The resources below will help you unlock the power of humane education---infusing kindness to animals throughout your teaching. Engage your English language learners and your Multilanguage learners while teaching your curriculum in a way that motivates students and promotes compassion towards animals.

In addition to being a great educational practice, humane education is in fact required in NY's elementary schools as per NYS education law. Humane education is not more work for you – in fact, it's less! You can teach your language objectives through the resources below such as the websites with already made standards-aligned lesson plans and handouts. While many of the tools are geared for students in grades K - 12, adult learners of English will find the topics to be motivating as well. Utilizing the lessons below will make both you and your students more excited to learn while exploring these topics.

Resources You'll Need

Resource #1: Web-based Resources

- **Humane Education Teaching Resources (HEART)** - https://teachheart.org/

*HEART is a New York-based nonprofit public charity. Go to this site and click on "Educator Resources." Once there, enter your email to register and download their teaching guides. In these guides, you will have access to wonderful pre-made lessons and activities. With dozens of reproducible worksheets and other teaching tools, you will find it easy to infuse teaching about kindness to animals within your ELL lessons. In their "Humane Education Resource Guide", a lesson my students really enjoyed was titled "Communication and Empathy". Students analyzed how dogs communicate and they identified dogs' nonverbal cues. In addition to appreciating an animal's perspective, the role-playing and observation activities helped students improve their own English communication skills.

Older learners may find their "Justice for All" secondary teaching guide particularly interesting. It includes 50 thematic units in which critical thinking and solutions development are the goals. By targeting social responsibility to older students as well as younger ones, HEART, in partnership with an organization called Peace for Learning, provides lesson plans, activities, and worksheets appropriate for learners of all ages.

- **TeachKind** (the humane education division of PETA) – https://www.peta.org/teachkind/

Go to the right side under "Lessons and Activities". The resources are divided by grade clusters. Among the most effective that I have used with my ELLs, was a grammar sheet that had students circle the verbs in the sentences that stated facts about animals. The children were engaged, expanded their vocabulary, and practiced what they learned about verbs. There are seemingly endless tools on this site. As is good teaching practice, you can choose to extend the lesson by exploring other websites and books that will relate to the topics you discover here. For example, I found YouTube clips of the sentence facts such as cows actually jumping for joy!

I highly recommend the free kit "Share the World" that they produce. This kit targets grades K- 2 learners. Video clips alongside discussion and writing activities really motivate students to communicate and increase their empathy!
https://headlines.peta.org/teachkind-share-the-world/

For adult learners, TeachKIND's debate kits, accessed through a tab located along the righthand side, provide excellent opportunities for them to use their English language skills in an authentic learning experience. Topics currently include: the Canada seal hunt, dog and cat sterilization mandates, and analyzing speciesism. The site directs learners to create an affirmative argument, become an expert by researching the topic through the links provided, and build their case in preparation for a class debate or presentation. Depending on how much English your students have, you can provide scaffolds, such as sentence frames and word banks, to aid in this project.

Resource #2: Organizations to Support You

Trips, virtual & otherwise; Free Posters; Books; Kids Magazines

- **Farm Sanctuary**

https://www.farmsanctuary.org/humane-education/ Animals that live on farms are the subject of many books and lessons. This sanctuary in upstate New York is a wonderful resource. Learning about these animals through this organization can inspire many students to pay extra attention in class. In addition to trips, there are live virtual presentations, pre-recorded presentations, and a downloadable curriculum.

- **Show Your Soft Side**

https://showyoursoftside.org/ Click on "Programs", then scroll down. Click on "Bringing Soft Side to Every Classroom" *Free posters for your school* – all the classrooms in my building have one! This special organization is dedicated to showing that being tough and cool should also include being kind to animals. They created a campaign in which they photograph sports heroes, actors, and influencers, along with their pets, promoting compassion for animals.

I use the posters in lessons about adjectives and ask the students to describe the person and the animal in the photo. Another classroom activity I use is having the poster be a catalyst for a class-wide discussion about ways to show kindness. Students give examples and I write their responses in a word cloud graphic organizer (which can be accessed free online at www.wordclouds.com). This activity of eliciting examples from the students turns into a shared writing lesson. Also, you can use the Show Your Soft Side video links with discussion starters and downloadable free curricula.

- **Red Rover – KIND News**

https://kindnews.redrover.org/ For a small annual fee ($30), you can order a classroom set of 30 copies of animal kindness-themed magazines, with new issues that come every two months. Students look forward to reading the stories about animals, doing the activities, and playing the accompanying online games. The magazines are effective tools for classroom discussions and extension lessons. I always use their quizzes at the end of the magazine to teach my students the skill of finding answers independently.

- **Books That Target Kindness to Animals**

Who Chains You Publishing (now under the umbrella of Freedom Chaser books) https://whochainsyou.com/index.html This website provides a way to purchase animal protection-themed books for read alouds, shared reading, & student independent reading opportunities.

The Gryphon Press https://www.thegryphonpress.com/ These books celebrate the human-animal bond. These books lend themselves to teaching character traits and character analysis. Good graphic organizers to teach character traits are located at https://bookunitsteacher.com

Please note that this is not a comprehensive list, but rather a sample of the many tools that have been developed by humane education and curriculum experts throughout the years.

How to Start

When children are instructed with a focus on empathy and compassion for animals, they respond with interest and engagement. To implement humane education, I would suggest that you look at your teaching goals such as increasing your students' writing or speaking, and then incorporate the resources in this article. Watch your teaching improve!

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Speaking Project: Building a Collaborative Classroom under the Pandemic Through Group Work and mini-Research

Margaret R. Ibasco

"In exploring actual communication, we become teaching learners in the same way our students must become language learners if they are to be able to use the target language. A text to a student is a product just as a plan to a teacher. As a starting point to engage in the process of exploration, they can be helpful. But as ends in themselves, they will do nothing but stop us from seeing. As many who travel are quick to point out, a journey to a place is more revealing than the destination. The pleasure of getting someplace is often more intense than arriving" (Fanselow, 1987, p. 475).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, adult learning center classes in New York City were held only online during Spring 2021. One class I taught with CESL Fordham was in the evening, held twice a week synchronously on zoom. Like most virtual ESL classes, getting students to speak and collaborate can be challenging for the following reasons:

1. When they join the class, they are asked to mute their audio. In an in-person classroom setting, as soon as students see each other, they tend to verbalize immediately, which encourages them to converse more.

2. When students are together at the beginning of the class, they do not start a conversation amongst themselves. They are isolated from each other.
In an in-person classroom setting, as soon as students see each other, they can generally strike a conversation on any topic including the weather and their weekend plans.

Apart from normal interactions in class, language teachers constantly evaluate lesson plans, think , and question how to encourage greater engagement and collaboration among their students. Two questions keep resonating:
- How can students practice speaking more in remote learning?
- How can group work be more encouraged in remote learning?

My intermediate ESL adult learners were used to completing regular, individual remote speaking assignments in which they would record themselves and submit the audio online, which I would then comment on. I would share one or two recordings during a Zoom class and then the students would listen and discuss it. To break this pattern of individual speaking assignments, I thought of introducing a group speaking project with the goal of addressing both the lack of speaking and group work that occurs in a remote setting. At first, the students hesitated because their different work schedules might make it difficult to organize meetings with each other outside their class. The speaking project was introduced to the class with a visual presentation of the table (see Appendix A and B) of the Bronx landmarks which will be explained more in the following segments. After explaining that the project would focus on learning about significant landmarks in the Bronx and the idea of interacting in small groups for a change given the absence of them due to COVID, the students seemed eager to hear more about the group speaking project and welcomed the experience.

The Speaking Project Approach

For the project, students in small groups, choose one Bronx landmark, research it, and present during the virtual synchronous class. I broke the class into groups of three instead of having the students choose because in past classes, students preferred that I assigned groups, especially in online classes. Burke (2011) seems to agree with this decision as she suggests "groups which are assigned by the instructor tend to perform better than self-selected groups" (p. 90). Once the students were in their groups, they were given 16 landmarks, from which they chose one to research including location, historical background, etc. and begin filing in the table as the groups as is mentioned in the table (See Appendix).

Timeline

February 16: The project was presented to the class; students were assigned groups, given a list of Bronx landmarks, and instructed to discuss and make their choice. For homework, students did research on their chosen landmark and were instructed to keep in touch with each other on the project through WhatsApp where they asked questions, raised concerns and made comments on their project. As part of the WhatsApp group I

monitored their progress and addressed any concerns or questions they might have had.

February 18: Students finalized their choice of landmark (see Appendix C) in breakout rooms and shared their landmark research, made comments on each other's work, and asked questions of each other about the project.

February 25: Presentation order was assigned randomly through color-coded circles. First, the students chose a color which had been assigned an equivalent number in advance, for example, orange is 1, blue is 2 and so on. Then in breakout rooms, students finalized their individual roles within the presentation –i.e. who will give the introduction and present the members in the group; who will take care of the slides/images during the presentation etc. In between, I hopped from room to room to check on their progress and to answer any questions the students had that may have come up in their room or in the WhatsApp thread.

The Group Presentations – March 2 and March 4

The first four groups were assigned to present on March 2nd, and the other three on March 4th. Of the seven groups, four groups presented their report with a slide presentation, two groups with a document with photos, and one group with both a slide and a video segment of themselves at the Whitestone Bridge with it visible in the background, a highlight of the speaking project. After each presentation, the students clapped. The presenters gave the other students a chance to ask questions and then thanked their audience for listening and for appreciating their presentations. Overall, this project increased both their speaking and collaboration, having a positive effect on student learning (DelliCarpini & Gulla, 2009)

Conclusion

Overall, the students were very proud of their presentations. They all live in the Bronx, are proud of their borough, and think that other students in the program can relate to what they shared in class, so they all worked well together, researching, and reading more about their borough. At first the whole speaking project was thought to be

challenging given the students' individual schedules in terms of work, childcare, and other family matters, but in the end, it was a success because along the way, the students discovered that with cooperation and willingness to work together, they could finish the project. Such great teamwork! As Fanselow (1987) mentions, "By seeing alternatives as different options, rather than better options, and by realizing that each rule we follow has advantages and disadvantages for achieving certain ends," true exploration can really flourish (p. 170). Instructors must be open to such insight. If they are, the students will be encouraged to try all possibilities to improve their learning. Teachers and students across NY and elsewhere can choose landmarks in their own communities to talk about and share historical backgrounds. The Speaking Project started with open-ended questions - will online group collaboration work; will students willingly communicate and find time to research and discuss their findings – and ended with timely, informative online presentations of the Bronx, which ultimately did encourage greater collaboration and interaction among the students.

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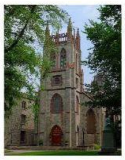
Appendix A

Groups 1-4 will present on Tuesday and Groups 5. 6 and 7 on Thursday

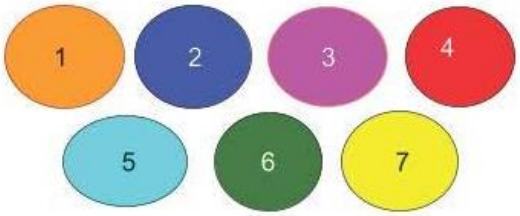
Landmarks	Where?	When?	Photo(s)	Group members' names
1. Little Italy				Jasmine, Yanfreisy and Victoria
2.Woodlawn Cemetery				Estanislao and Father Louis-Jacques
3. Little Italy				Luz, Ana and Juana
4.Fordham University Church			 	Sabelle, Mimoza,
5.Yankee Stadium 6.Yankee Stadium				Mabel, Festor , Sandra _____ Marianela, Maria, Silva
7. Bronx Whitestone Bridge ***Video segment				Martha, Anelsa and Reny
8. Edgar Allan Poe Cottage	2640 Grand Concourse at East	1812	House -	

Appendix B

Groups 1-4 will present on Tuesday and Groups 5. 6 and 7 on Thursday

9. Bronx Museum	1040 Grand Concourse, The Bronx, NY 10456	1971	Image	
10. Valentine Varian House Bronx Historical Society	3266 Bainbridge Avenue, Norwood,	1758	Image	
11. Hall of Fame for Great				
12. Nautical Museum				
13.Wavehill				
14. 1520 Sedgwick Avenue				
15. Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance				
16. Van Cortlandt Park			Images	

Instruction: Each group chooses a color during class time.



Appendix C

Groups 1-4 will present on Tuesday and Groups 5. 6 and 7 on Thursday

Landmarks	Where?	When?	Photo(s)	Group members' names
1. Little Italy				Jasmine, Yanfreisy and Victoria
2.Woodlawn Cemetery				Estanislao and Father Louis-Jacques
3. Little Italy				Luz, Ana and Juana
4.Fordham University Church				Sabelle, Mimoza,
5.Yankee Stadium 6.Yankee Stadium				Mabel, Festor , Sandra _____ Marianela, Maria, Silva
7. Bronx Whitestone Bridge ***Video segment				Martha, Anelsa and Reny
8. Edgar Allan Poe Cottage				
9. Bronx Museum				
10. Valentine Varian				

Cultural Connections

This is an ongoing column featuring articles focusing on awareness of diverse expectations, values and beliefs that our students have for practical and pedagogical uses. Please send article submissions to the column editor, Jocelyn Choi, ASA College at mosaic@nystesol.org

Beliefs Regarding Heritage Language Maintenance in the Russian American Community

Yana Shifrina-Piljovin

Introduction

There is anecdotal evidence that Russian-Americans in Brooklyn, New York aspire to preserve the heritage language for their children. To explore and understand how parental language beliefs reflect families' daily language use, I observed interactions between the participants and analyzed questionnaire responses (see appendix A). These would shed light on ways parental language behavior among Russian-American bilinguals reflect their language beliefs in heritage language maintenance for their American born children.

Definition of heritage bilinguals

Polinsky and Kagan (2007) call heritage language a baseline language for a heritage speaker – "a language that he or she was exposed to as a child" (p.8). These researchers define *heritage language maintenance* as a process of preserving the language of the immigrant parents for their American born and/or raised children on an adequate level of proficiency. The authors claim that even though the manner of parental input and length of exposure to the baseline language are strong predictors of heritage language proficiency, it still might be challenging to accurately ascertain the heritage learner's ability in the home language due to constant changes in levels of proficiency in the language of origin among heritage language speakers.

Deprivation of L1

While bilingualism and biculturalism are common among first generation immigrants, it appears that the heritage language is partially lost by the second generation, and is

lost completely by the third (Bertsch, 2013; Gordon, 1964; Genesse, 2015). Parents struggle to preserve the traditional language with the former giving way to the dominant language (Mucherah, 2008; Isurin, 2011; Zhou, 1997; Polinsky, & Kagan, 2007). The situation is exacerbated by the fact that caregivers are not necessarily aware of the benefits of exposure to multiple languages during the early years of children's development. While current research suggests the benefits of bilingualism over monolingualism (Okal, 2014; Klein, 2015; Leikin, Schwartz, & Share, 2010) and while the Russian American community has been growing fast in recent years, (Kagan, 2010; Mounton, 2011) not much is known about the beliefs that these parents hold concerning heritage language maintenance.

Questionnaire results

The adult bilingual participants (average age 33-41) have resided in the United States an average of 22.4 years, emigrated from Russia with their parents during their late middle school years, and consider the U.S. their home. The participants confirmed they use Russian as the main language of household communication; however, their parents feel their children use too much English with them at home, and also state that when their children use English at home, they attempt to redirect their youngsters to Russian.

Observational results

The findings indicate that parents of heritage bilingual children have a strong command of the Russian language as their L1 and aspire to preserve it for their own American-born heritage bilingual children. However, because they have been acquiring English and experiencing acculturation processes, the Russian of these bilingual parents has some degree of shift and is diverging from that of non-bilingual Russian speakers. The variety of Russian language used by Russian Americans is in and of itself rich and effective in enabling speakers to meet their communicative goals, which enables speakers to provide translation from their L1 to L2 and vice versa, as is seen in the multiple instances of code switching and code-mixing, where participants switch from English to Russian and vice versa in the same sentence without changing the topic of the conversation. This type of Russian language, which emerges in the U.S.A., becomes

a variation of a heritage language or a form of maintained language deviating from the formal language spoken in the Russian Federation.
According to parents, their children's strongest language skill in Russian is speaking, while parents feel their children are more proficient in expressing academic-related topics in English, but feelings, personal thoughts, and daily needs are better explained in Russian. Additionally, parents noted that their children automatically switch between languages when speaking with different types of audiences.

During observations both bilingual parents and heritage bilingual children were creating a new type of non-standard, non-native vernacular. When any of the participants had an issue coming up with a Russian word to define something, they used a word with similar meaning, which stood out by its inappropriateness. For example, when one of the youngsters described how she played with a hula hoop, she said "ring". Both words "hula hoop" and "ring" are similar in shape, but differ in content, so the participant struggled finding content appropriate vocabulary and used a familiar word with similar physical characteristics.

Discussion

In summary, language shift, or failure to transmit the family language fully to the next generations, appears to be common in Russian American speech communities of Brooklyn researched in this paper. Participants of this study demonstrated non-native linguistic features. This type of Russian language is drastically changed because of the heritage bilingual children's use and mixing of English has created new patterns of speech.

After collecting and analyzing data, it is increasingly evident that Russian language speaking parents in Brooklyn need support in their attempt aimed at ensuring that their children preserve the family language. Training and multicultural education classes that raise metalinguistic awareness for parents can be a greatly benefit. The availability of activities, such as camps, movies, sports, and festivals in Russian might also have a high impact. If these are present, heritage language speakers will not have to choose between the host and heritage language and culture and will be able to maintain both.

Conclusion

In summary, a closer look at specific subgroup of heritage bilinguals provided insight into how successful or unsuccessful parents have been in their endeavors and what kind of support is lacking and is likely to be beneficial.

The findings about parental beliefs and success at preserving heritage language are helpful for educators to bridge classroom instruction and expectations with students' L1 levels, differentiate materials to develop linguistic skills, foster their language acquisition in multiple languages as well as increase understanding of common area subjects. Making educators aware of parental beliefs about their youngsters' heritage language acquisition will support the teachers in facilitating a linguistic transfer between the languages when students are still acquiring English.

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51st Annual Conference

From 'Low-Tech' to 'Know Tech': Transitioning to Online ESOL Classes

Roberta L. LeBaron

For over 50 years, the labor- and healthcare employer-governed Training and Employment Funds (TEF) of 1199SEIU has worked to provide a full range of educational benefits and job training programs for healthcare workers including English to Speakers of Other Languages classes.

TEF's Education Department in the New York Downstate Region started the Spring 2020 semester in mid-January with over 600 adult learners enrolled in the ESOL program and a staff of 17 part-time instructors supported by seven program administrators. Classes were exclusively in-person at training sites and schools easily reached by public transportation in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and The Bronx.

The Initial Impact of Covid-19 on our Program

As the semester progressed, so did the spread of Covid-19, hitting New York City particularly fiercely. On March 10th, 2020, health protocols ended all in-person classes. After this abrupt stop, instructors used WhatsApp groups to share content and stay in communication to sustain learning. All ESOL students received licensed access to a cellphone app (Cell-Ed) to gain new skills on their own.

When it became clear that the worsening health crisis would not allow in-person classes to resume that semester, attention turned to transitioning the program to an online format for the fall semester and the many obstacles to overcome that we knew lay ahead. Students had limited access to Wi-Fi or an electronic device other than a smart phone. Few instructors had any online teaching experience, and we had no remote format-ready curriculum. Our main office building had closed, so program administrators, working from home for the first time, lacked a way to complete paperwork required by our funding sources. We needed to reinvent ourselves as a program and get ready for the challenges a pandemic had thrown everyone's way.

Preparing for a Pivot

The anxious early weeks of summer left us wondering how to recruit and assess students, whether students would attend online classes and how long a session should be, if instructors would be able to deliver engaging material without being physically present in a classroom, and how to train everyone to use new technology for teaching and learning.

To be ready, our leadership created a comprehensive plan of action including a task timeline. As educators, we began researching online learning models and watching webinars and video tutorials. Staff members with distance learning experience as students or as parents of school-age children learning at home contributed useful insight. We developed a new tech-savvy vocabulary: Zoom meeting, screenshare, Whiteboard, breakout rooms, bulk texting, Microsoft Forms, Nitro Pro, and Padlet.
The first priority for our online transition was choosing a videoconferencing platform. We didn't require a gradebook feature and would only be presenting real-time synchronous classes, so Zoom looked like the best choice to meet our needs.
We surveyed our student population about their access to electronic devices and their experience with email and videoconferencing by texting a Microsoft Forms link. The results showed most students had access only to a smartphone and no experience with online learning. They would need training and support.

Recruiting and Placement

The survey also indicated fewer students than in the previous semester planned to attend classes that fall. As frontline healthcare workers, they were working longer shifts and were too busy, tired, or emotionally drained to take classes. Some preferred to return when learning was in-person. The pandemic and its accompanying protocols also presented obstacles to recruiting new students. Our usual outreach done at healthcare sites wasn't an option, so we relied on sending digital flyers and reaching out to former students.

Placement testing and funding-required pre- and post-testing were necessary, but in-person test-taking sessions were no longer possible. Using Microsoft Forms, we created

a new set of exams based on the grammar, vocabulary, and life skills presented in our adopted textbook series (Step Forward) and sent links to the tests via bulk text messaging for students to take a cellphone-friendly test.

Online Accessible Curriculum and Administration

We next needed core curriculum in an online format and learned book publishers had created online versions of their textbooks to screenshare during class. Staff members went into the office under strict safety guidelines to mail hard copies of books directly to students' homes.

On July 1st, a letter to instructors and students informed them of our transition to fully remote instruction. We created and sent teacher and multilingual student Zoom guides and provided instructors with staff development to learn how to teach using Zoom and online textbooks. In August, we surveyed instructors to learn about their readiness to teach online with the new job requirements: access to a laptop or tablet and Wi-Fi (we didn't allow using a cellphone to give classes), competency with the features of Zoom, and a quiet, clear designated place to teach. Some instructors opted out of accepting an online teaching assignment.

We also had to devise a new, paperless way to collect funder-required worker demographic information, signed attendance verification, and instructor timesheets. Electronic signatures on online fillable pdf versions of forms and Excel sheets for attendance that instructors could submit by email met the requirements. Staff generated Zoom attendance reports performed as attendance verification. The new paperless system proved efficient and environmentally friendly.

The final step was opening a Zoom account with multiple licensed users and scheduling the recurring classes. To reduce costs, instructors shared accounts. We recorded Zoom account and Meeting information in a master Excel chart in our Microsoft Teams shared site. Program coordinators emailed account information to teachers and sent links to students by email and bulk text messaging.

The Semester Launch

On September 25th, 2020, these gains in technology successfully brought teachers and students back together in an innovative and effective way.
Through teamwork, strategizing, and trying new approaches that we hadn't dreamed feasible, the ESOL program had overcome obstacles and successfully transitioned to a 100% remote format that is still fully in place for all instruction, administration, and assessment as of our fall 2021 semester. A pandemic had forced an unanticipated pivot, and we rose to the challenge to serve the members of 1199SEIU.

Roberta L. LeBaron is the Coordinator of the Foreign Language Program in the Education Division of 1199SEIU TEF. A former college adjunct instructor of ESOL for over 20 years, she holds a BA in Applied Linguistics and Spanish and an MSEd with a concentration in TESOL, both from CUNY Queens College. She is passionate about using technology to enhance language learning and serving the dedicated frontline essential healthcare workers of 1199SEIU. She can be reached at roberta.chacon@1199funds.org.

51st Annual Conference

The Pedagogy & Language Enrichment Technology Wheel Multimodal and Multiliteracy Perspectives

Jasmin (Bey) Cowin, Ed.D.

New technologies are reshaping educational philosophies and the pedagogies that underlie them as they also transform the modes of delivery within language teachers' repertoire. However, easy to navigate support for teachers planning to connect language pedagogy and enrichment through technology is still developing. This poster hopes to provide some of that needed support as it uses a graphic wheel to illustrate pedagogical and student actions in categories such as presence, accessibility and interactivity defined by aspects of the technology. This clickable Pedagogy & Language Enrichment through Technology Wheel is meant to function as practical support for language teachers looking for additional technology resources for language learning enrichment.

Introduction

Virtual Fieldtrips through virtual reality (VR) and interactive technologies offer multiple benefits for ELLs through in-depth, hands-on experiences. Incorporation of VR and technology can connect ELL background knowledge while fostering synthesis of conceptual knowledge through direct observations and applied language practice. VR environments and interactive technology also offer ELLs first-person experiences. Such first-person experiences support development of observational skills in real world settings and facilitate the four foundational skills of language learning through social and academic interactions. As communication practices have become increasingly shaped by developments in information and multimedia technologies, it is no longer possible for us to think about literacy solely as a linguistic accomplishment. (Jewitt, 2008, p. 241)

The Quadrant

Taking center stage is the quadrant with the four foundational skills of language learning: reading (comprehension skill), writing (production skill), listening (comprehension skill), speaking (production skill). Three teaching approaches are suited for the simultaneous application of the four skills in VR and tech spaces: content-

based instruction, task-based instruction, and project-based learning, which the chart below details individually and suggests how technology can support their use.

Content-based Instruction (CBI)	**Task-based Instruction (TBI)**	**Project-based Learning (PBL)**
Theme-based learning through use of common ideas and topics across multiple contexts.	Utilizes tasks or activities which require comprehending, generating, manipulating, or interacting in the target language.	Concretizes integration of all four foundational skills while interconnecting language, culture, experience and learning strategies. (Turnbull, 1999)
CBI focuses on topics of high-level interest to students, encompassing a wide range of language skills	TBI helps learners explore a variety of communication opportunities offered in their virtual surroundings.	PBL requires identification which aspects of language, culture, experience and learning strategies are required to complete the project.

Presence, Interactivity, and Accessibility

Circling the quadrant are presence, interactivity, and accessibility. Presence is defined as the user's "sense of being there" in the virtual environment. (Pillai, 2013) User-driven interactivity is related to both presence and accessibility. Interactivity encompasses both a student's ability to interact with and manipulate objects in the virtual environment as well as the teachers' ability to support differentiated, scaffolded, and potentially personalized learning experiences. (Moysey, 2019) Accessibility includes both access to required hardware and comprehensible input. Comprehensible input needs to be coupled with alignment to the experience's learning outcomes. Comprehensible input is language input that can be understood by listeners despite them not understanding all the words and structures in it. Melhuish (2010) identified five benefits in using mobile technologies to aid student learning: (i) portability, (ii) increased accessibility, (iii) enabling student agency, (iv) connection to others, and (v) the ability to tailor personalized, educational exploration to each student. (Melluish, 2010)

The Experience Wheel and Teaching Tips

The surrounding wheel features a selection of clickable experiences for multimodal and multi-literal explorations for language teachers looking to incorporate additional resources for language learning enrichment. Often, "listening comprehension outpaces reading comprehension from early childhood through at least middle school." (Fisher, 2014) The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), specifically Anchor Standard 1, the Speaking and Listening domain focuses on increased communicative competency.

> Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 22)

Online activities such as Virtual Fieldtrips and incorporation of technology help with language acquisition through focusing Ell's attention and helping with automaticity of language use. Both Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) can be practiced using the enrichment activities featured in the wheel.

Discussion

Language acquisition is different from language learning. Language acquisition is "unconscious, implicit, picked up from meaningful, interesting messages in the target language. Acquiring language in these ways advances the student's ability in the language." (Patrick, 2019) In contrast, language learning is a deliberately undertaken activity. A range of multimodal and multi-literal opportunities help ELLs with robust language practice and language acquisition. Teachers can plan CBI, TBI and PBL activities using targeted multimodal and multiliteracy activities while engaging their ELLs in applied language practice thus increasing communicative competency.

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