THE CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS OF TEACHING EAL STUDENTS ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM HIGHER EDUCATION. IS THERE A ROLE FOR PLURILINGUAL PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES?

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Teaching students (who speak and write English as an additional language) across the disciplines in Anglophone higher education

Focus is on on EAL students and their instructors in Canada

- What challenges do EAL students and their instructors face in linguistically-diverse classes across the disciplines?
- How do instructors respond and adapt their teaching in classes that are characterized by large numbers of students learning through English as an additional language?

A kind of mirror image to EMI?

Consider applicability to EAP and EMI in Hong Kong

Plurilingual pedagogies?

- Students’ additional languages should be seen as assets for learning and spaces should be opened up to promote language awareness, and for students to use different languages as tools for learning.
- How realistic is this in the EAP classroom and different courses across the disciplines?

Implications of findings

- In EAP and “content” classes…
What about Canada and multi-/plurilingualism?
Pluri/Multilingualism in Canada and Canadian higher education

- Canada: a complex history when it comes to languages

- 20% of the population of 36 million speak French as a first language - most live in Québec and eastern Canada

- Many immigrant languages used in daily life

- Around 60 indigenous languages, mostly endangered
Vancouver to Montreal? 5,000km
Chinese languages and Punjabi are the most spoken immigrant languages in Vancouver.

In Greater Vancouver, more than one million people speak a family language other than one of the two official languages.

(2016 Stats Canada Census)
Vancouver, Canada

(source: https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSvQCRHkmS27RA4Vb10GSADxi18pYPT1edekO06MAycZ2MTC1C15A)
Vancouver CMA
Percentage of allophones* by 2006 Census Tracts (CTs)

*Allophones: Population with a language other than English or French as mother tongue
Plurilingualism or multilingualism?
What’s the difference?

Plurilingualism describes sociolinguistic phenomena in contact situations, where people use two/three or more languages in interactions, as does multilingualism.

A translation of multilingualism?: “it’s just the word French people use for multilingualism.”

So, educators who describe phenomena with either the pluri or multi stem may be describing the same things.
Much-cited **difference**: social versus individual: lost in translation???

- The terminological switch has differentiated *multilingualism (the study of societal contact)* from *plurilingualism (the study of individuals’ repertoires and agency in several languages)* (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Gajo, 2014; Moore & Gajo, 2009).

- But a plurilingual speaker should always be seen as **a social actor (un acteur social)**.

- Plurilingualism focuses on the inter-relation and interconnectedness of languages "**particularly, but not exclusively, at the level of the individual**" (Piccardo, 2013, p. 601).

- Is a plurilingual lens over-agentive, relegating structural/discursive constraint?

Plurilingualism as a phenomenon

- interactions involving multiple languages, when interlocutors may switch and mix languages purposefully and/or creatively without necessarily being completely fluent in one or all of the languages involved.

A plurilingual lens

- a person’s languages and cultures viewed as interrelating in complex ways that change with time and circumstances, and which depend on individuals’ biographies, lived experiences, social trajectories, life paths (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 1997, 2009). Challenges the understandings of languages as "fixed and discrete entities" (Taylor & Snoddon, 2013, p. 440), and in terms of full and balanced competence.

Plurilingual pedagogy

- In employing this plurilingual lens in teaching and learning contexts, teachers challenge discourses of deficit, (in)competence, and open up spaces for a plurality of languages and cultures in their classes: languages as assets/resources for learning
Now let’s look briefly at data excerpts from previous research

- Quick overview of data from plurilingual students taking first year “generic” academic literacy courses
- Writing practices and use of languages other than English in and around learning
- Please consider implications for teaching EAP and EMI context in Hong Kong
Accessing multilingual spaces...
(source: Marshall & Moore, 2013)

Jessie mixing languages in and around her learning

**Writing Sample 1: Population Growth in China**

As one of the world’s most populous countries, China has a population of just over 1.4 billion, representing 20 percent of the world’s population of 7 billion. In other words, every fifth person on the planet is a resident of China (Rosenberg, 2010). In addition, data released by the China State Statistics Bureau indicated that China’s population will peak at 1.402 to 1.550 billion in the next 30 years (China, 1995). However, even though China is still overpopulated, the policies set up by the government to control the population problems have been somewhat effective in reducing the growth rate. In fact, India, which is currently the world’s second most populous country is expected surpass China in population by 2040 (Rosenberg, 2010). This paper will discuss the history of Chinese population growth the reasons why the People’s Republic of China established its population policies, and the effects of those policies.
Writing samples: Jessie: chatting on Weico (from Marshall & Moore, 2013)

- First 11 simplified Chinese characters: “If something good happens to you, it might be because something bad happened before.”
- 4 icons that follow: “unhappy faces” - showed her followers her emotions at the time
- Next 6 Chinese characters: “Two bad things make me feel silly or stupid, like my brain becomes, doesn’t work.”
- 5 face icons: first two (unhappy faces) next three (scarey faces).
- Next 10 face icons: no individual meanings for each icon; instead “this whole faces mean I’m happy ’cause it’s time for lunch and that means it’s gonna make me fat [laughs], burgers, French fries, noodles.”
- “Without emoticons the sentence would not catch attention.” Jessie’s normal practice on Weico to combine languages, scripts, & emoticons.
- Jessie was quite sure that all of her readers could interpret the meaning of her text.
In-class recordings: Yi & Ivan: Style & sentence structure
(source: Marshall & Moore, 2013)

I: 说那个, repeating writing 完了之后，然后把那句子 改变就行了，对不对？ “The fact is academic writing is.. so.. for university students, Academic Writing is not always easy”.

[This means that, repeating writing after doing the repetitive writing, only the sentence needs to be changed, right? “The fact is academic writing is.. so.. for university students, Academic Writing is not always easy”.]

I: 第二个是那个。。simple words吧？
[The 2nd one is, simple words, right?]

Y: Humm, 对。呵，不是。是 simple sentence structure。
[Humm, you are right. Ah, no, you are not right. Actually, that’s a simple sentence structure.]
him, explaining that he is making a *hasty generalization* and that he is mistaken. Use an appropriate writing style.

2. **Email or text message**
   You are listening to a radio talk show debate on whether or not marijuana should be legalized. The talk show host asks listeners to send a text message or email with their views on the issue. Write a message on the subject and make reference in some way to the *slippery slope fallacy*. Follow the normal style you would use for this genre of writing.

3. **Free writing**
   Should countries that have abolished the death penalty reintroduce it if the majority of the population supports its reinstatement? Answer the question with reference to the *ad populum fallacy*. Write in a more formal academic style.

4. **A two-minute speech**
   President George W. Bush famously addressed the United Nations General Assembly after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and stated, “You’re either with us or against us in the fight against terror.” Write a short script for a two-minute speech to your tutorial group on the issue. Make sure to refer to the *false dichotomy fallacy*. Write the script in a style that is appropriate for speaking academically.
Send a text message to the DJ... (from Marshall & Moore, 2018)

TEXT MESSAGE

Hey radio station guy! I was listening while you were talking about weed being a gateway drug 😞. Personally, I don’t agree with your thoughts 😞. I don’t believe weed is a gateway drug because just 'cuz someone smokes it doesn’t mean they’ll throw a needle in one hand... 🙄

에목록했던 사람들은 이럴까봐도 마약물질들이 이_reviews에 의해 흡입하기도 많은 중요한요인이내.

OMG! 😄 😄

# Legalize Weed
A: It say um like “people who did drugs eventually will do drugs even though the law forbids them to do drugs so it it’ll going to be end up same consequence” is what I wrote in Korean.

I: So why did you write it in Korean?

A: The people who I worked with they say I should write that in Korean.

[…]

I: So how did you feel when they asked you to write in Korean something that was going to be shown to all your classmates? What was your first reaction?

A: Uh. I thought they were joking because it’s English class and I should not supposed to write Korean in like, like such a present.. presentation and stuff, but like after reading the presentation, like, I kind of get why they were asked to write in Korean … Because it’s about text messaging and like mostly I write Korean when I text message so it’s more like free writing.

I: What was interesting was that after you did that everyone else started doing the same thing.

A: Yeah […] I think because […] said, um, you kind of, uhm, put up good comment about what I did, so they thought doing, uhm, putting another language would be good for them to do.
Plurilingual texts in a generic academic writing class

- Students had to write monolingual texts in academic English for assessment
- Mixed languages creatively in and around their learning, on and off campus
- Plurilingual process – monolingual assessed product

Data
- Collected in pluri-friendly classrooms: teacher agency…
- In the classes, language was the content…
What about when students leave our EAP/academic writing classes?

- Let’s now look at issues that relate to EAL students in linguistically diverse classes across the disciplines.

- Interviews with eight WI instructors from different disciplines – talking about writing and (not)teaching writing
- Instructors describe their responses to linguistic diversity in their classes, and perceptions of their roles as WI instructors.
- Pedagogical dilemmas, conceptual binaries, and conflicting professional identities.
- Gives some insight into the classes that our EAPs students move onto
# Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Stage</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Sam</td>
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<td>Robin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
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<td>Pat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
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<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steph</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Applied Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mani</td>
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EAL students: an asset to the class

Jamie: I think particularly because I tend to teach on ethical issues that span international borders, that when they can be encouraged to participate, that they act as a wider extent of experience, especially with global issues.

Morgan: Broader perspective, a different perspective, from their own backgrounds. Often good research skills.
Struggles with communication

Robin: You know, I had a guy, I had this guy in my class last semester ... we were sitting here, the two of us, trying to decipher what he had written on a diagnostic piece of writing, and we sat there for twenty minutes the two of us, just trying to, like, the phrases he’d used in the sentence ... I stared at that thing for twenty minutes and there was nothing, yeah ... And, I mean, that, I think that’s a pretty good representation of the level of language a lot of our students have, which is a huge concern to us.
Languages other than English in class: the immersion myth

Pat: Um, yeah, I have a bias, I have a bias that I feel that if you’re learning a language, English, that you should be speaking it in the classroom. Because I’m not teaching English as a second language.

Morgan: I might speak to the students, especially early on, you know, if I hear them speaking Mandarin, I might join in [speaking Mandarin] during a break, or after class and just, you know, sort of, trying to get them so that they feel comfortable with me.
Working in groups

Pat: So, we don’t, we don’t have an A writer with a C, or a D writer. … it’s been so unfair for the students who’ve been doing really well, and what we found was the students who really didn’t have the capacity to pass the course were passing because they were in groups that were much stronger.

Robin: I just had a group in here a couple of weeks ago, where it was two native speakers and one non-native speaker; he was working his butt off, but, you know, the bottom line is you can’t use anything that he’s producing; he can’t contribute to the group, and his language skills were so, um, problematic, he couldn’t even follow basic directions in an email to find Tim Hortons.
Mani: I feel very sad for those students, because I think they become the sort of cash cow for the university, and they're seen as a paycheque. And if we get more international students, they pay these differential tuition fees and now we can fund more programs, and I think the tension is if you're, if you see the student is bringing in money, then how many resources will you actually put into supporting them? And so, I think we have a moral obligation and if we bring students into university, and we tell them there is a threshold for English wherever that is, that should be a realistic threshold for success.
Is plurilingualism an asset across the disciplines?

One-year study of plurilingualism as an asset for learning across the disciplines

Data collected by a plurilingual team of two investigators and six research assistants, speaking English, French, Mandarin, Japanese, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Cantonese

- 40 hours of classroom observations carried out over a six-month period
- Approximately five hours of recordings of students’ interactions while they carried out collaborative tasks
- Semi-structured interviews with 23 students and seven instructors
- Analysis of students’ writing samples
Undergraduate comparative literature

- 13 students, 2 instructors
- RA observations: 7 observations of a 3-hour class; both participant and non-participant observations conducted
- *Plurilingual theory and pedagogy consciously integrated into class framework
- I’m calling this proactive as opposed to reactive plurilingual pedagogy
- Classes involved producing translingual texts and language awareness activities
“Can awareness of plurilingual theory and pedagogy help instructors to view linguistic diversity as an asset, rather than as a deficit, in their classes?”
Writing up fieldnotes

Dissertation of writing notes/words in Chinese.

Don’t keep things to yourself.

Quit on translation terminology.

She did not know enough so I did not get to keep a copy of this.

During class preparation, there is no emphasis on subject/money matters.

Learner’s phone a breakdown of code Ancient language = phrases.

Exam to see Mandarin while hearing the client.

Group work to collect different sections of the poem.
Before the class starts on the group work, two students read the poems aloud in class. Y reads it aloud in Cantonese and M in Mandarin. Z asks why Chinese can be pronounced in different ways through the same written text. This leads to a great serendipitous conversation about Chinese characters and the relationship between different Chinese languages but also the influences the Chinese and the Chinese language has had on other Asian countries. I-O talks about how she can read the text in Japanese a little and K mentions Hangul (Korean.) There are pinyin versions in the text as well. I-O prompts the class to look at the Cantonese break-down while listening to the Mandarin to hear/see the difference. Before M reads it in Mandarin, he mentions how there are rules regarding how Wang Wei is read in China. (He has studied the poems while in elementary school; later he mentions how he has had to memorize a lot of these poems as part of the Chinese curriculum.) I notice that he doesn’t even read the poem. He recites it from memory. I notice how people murmur in awe after he finishes. It’s great how the students are able to showcase, not only their other languages, but their other ways of learning are being honoured.
Key Issues to Consider

- The course was specifically designed to open up spaces for translingual text production and plurilingual pedagogical approaches – proactive rather than reactive plurilingual pedagogy.

- Students were working as plurilingual mediators (North & Piccardo, 2016): instructors had students of different languages working together to compare and learn from each other’s languages.

- **Language and content**: close

- Assessment?
Linguistics

- 42 students: 1/3 Mandarin speakers
- As a walking ethnographer (Pink, 2008).
- Classroom interactions (group discussion)
- Interviews
- Ethnographic field notes
Interview excerpts: Use of Mandarin as a tool for learning

- “It’s much easier to use native language to talk about assignments and tasks in the group discussion.....in study group, we also use Mandarin to discuss problems. **It improves our study**”

- “Speaking Mandarin with Chinese students in the group discussion can **give a sense of closeness**, which I think is important for me.......”

- “If we refer to some technical terms, we use English because it is not easy to translate them, but for general questions, we just use Mandarin which is **easier for understanding** each other.”

- “In group discussion, if I sit with groups of native speakers, I **feel stress** and sometimes I can’t catch up with them, but if I am in groups of Chinese students speaking Mandarin, I **feel comfortable and more confident** and **it helps my study**”
Recording students’ interactions: learning through Mandarin

C1: AMERICA, 可能是...A-M-E-R-I-C-A 就寫..[laugh] (AMERICA, maybe A-M-E-R-I-C-A, let's write down..)
04:30 - C2: 就四個syllable嗎? (Are there only 4 syllables?)
04:45 - C2: 這個..我覺得應該是unbounded (I think it should be unbounded)
C1: 那還是那個exhausted (then that is still exhausted)
C2: unbounded 是 exhaustedness of the.. (Unbounded is exhaustedness of the..)
C2: headedness of [something] is left-headed
C1:那你那個 image is extramateric...是第一個要這樣匯 這個我覺得好像不用.... (then your, that image is extrametric. For the first one, you must inflate that.. but for this I don't think so)
C2:那像是這個吧! (so like that?)
C1: 這個是需要的 但是這個的話 不是因為有那個..(This is necessary, but for that, isn't it because we have that...)
C2: 有stress (have stress)
C1: 這個就是有多餘的那個東西 就是有多餘的 其實我也..(This is something extra thing, it's like extra, actually i am..)
C2: 這個應該跟那個差不多 (this should be not any different from that)
The instructors were asked questions about the following:

- the languages they speak
- their understandings of the terms *multilingual* and *plurilingual*
- the use of different languages in their classes
- their pedagogical response to linguistic diversity
- their professional identities
Tech 100
A different academic literacy...

- Approximately 40 students were working individually at computer stations on a technical project.
- The main product by which the students were being assessed was not an essay or presentation; instead, they had to go through the processes of building a fully functional electronic circuit board/die:
Raj: I heard people talking in different languages, I go and tell them “in English in English” … Actually, I am discouraging them from dealing with anything other than English. I tell them, “look, you talk to each other in English, somehow try to communicate” but I think the moment there's nobody looking over their shoulder, then all of that disappears and they feel more comfortable talking in Korean, Punjabi, or Chinese.
Raj: I always tell them okay here's fine, but don't expect this in a company, ok, so they will not tolerate this. ...
One problematic area for Steph employing plurilingual approaches in classes was collaborative group work.

Steph: You see them working on the projects in the labs and so on, and they're talking away in whatever language, Farsi I guess is one and certainly Korean was another and Cantonese, but the documentation that I'm teaching is all in English so at the end they have to translate it over.

Steph: I think it's helpful to them at first. I think if you are happy talking in a particular language or if you are communicating with a language you are familiar with, that works. How employers might feel about that in a corporate type of environment, I don't know.

Mani: It's a weird tension where I think it's fine if students use other languages to help each other in the lab, but when there are these official modes of communication when it comes to evaluation, that becomes English
Different plurilingual fit in learning and writing across the disciplines?

Comparative literature and linguistics course: A good fit

- A range of creative, instrumental, agentive plurilingual interactions and texts, a context in which plurilingual pedagogies formed a good fit: classes where instructors encouraged students to make use of their plurilingual resources to learn content – language and “content” were close

Applied Science: more problematic

- In the contexts of Applied Sciences courses aiming to produce professionally competent working scientists, plurilingualism was viewed as both asset and hindrance.

- Tensions between learning process and assessment, the classroom and the imagined future workplace

Plurilingualism and plurilingual pedagogy were reconfigured and moulded according to context.
Food for thought...implications...EMI in Hong Kong

Generic academic literacy course

- Did the plurilingual approach help students to succeed in the course and in their future studies in different subject areas? How can we measure this?

Writing Intensive courses

- Asset, struggles, I’m not an ESL teacher, immersion myth, group work, cash cows

Literature, linguistics, and applied sciences

- Let students present content knowledge in L1, Mandarin helps learning, English only, group work, the workplace

What about relevance to EAP and EMI classes in Hong Kong?

- How can EAP classes prepare students for this complexity across the disciplines?
- How well trained are EMI instructors in applied and sociolinguistics?
- Should students be encouraged to use L1 in EMI contexts?
- What are the aims of EMI: immersion and/or content?
That’s all for today.

Any questions?
References


