CHAPTER 18

Pedagogies, Experiences, Access, Collaboration, and Equality (PEACE)

Reforming Language Pedagogies to Promote Social Justice for Undocumented Immigrants

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This chapter begins with the journey of the author's immigrant family as a principal source of influence on the author to pursue studies in the fields of social justice and language education. While the author's family story represents an isolated experience of a "documented" family, nevertheless it unmasks a context that many immigrants face. With a review of the current state of the undocumented immigrant as a linguistic minority, the chapter includes research on the misperceptions and mis-recognitions of undocumented individuals and interdisciplinary pedagogies that serve to promote global social justice learning. Within the constructs of an interdisciplinary framework, this chapter examines the role of intercultural competence skill development in transformative social justice education using collaborative service-learning models and interactive online tasks. Challenges and benefits of these pedagogical methods are also addressed in the chapter. Exploring the roles of each in the formation of a global life-long learner, specific classroom practices of service-learning and online tasks that incorporate self-reflection, critical thinking, meaningful interactions, and collaboration are reviewed.

With tears in her eyes, a former graduate student approached me after our English as a Second Language (ESL) certification course to express how a child of a refugee family that fled a war-torn nation forever altered her pedagogical and social justice perspectives. During an undergraduate linguistics course, another student courageously shared with our class the story of her undocumented parents' struggle to remain in the United States with her. Her parents' dream was to provide their

daughter with a safe home environment and educational opportunities. In response to her personal family story, one student trembled and cried to admit that her grandparent refused to shop in certain stores because of the Spanish-speaking customers who frequented the shops within her community. This student also noted that prior to the beginning of the undergraduate linguistics course that included serving undocumented families, she firmly believed that the increasing number of minority language speakers in the region was the fundamental reason for economic downturns. She was proud to admit that her experiences in the course and serving undocumented families transformed her perspectives on social justice practices and human life. As a result of her personal transformation, she chose to continue serving undocumented families after completing the course.

Poignant moments such as these represent personal and meaningful metamorphoses. It is difficult to pinpoint a decisive moment that led to my studies in social justice and language pedagogies. Growing up with an immigrant mother from Brazil who experienced inequalities unquestionably inspired me to pursue global studies and issues surrounding linguistic minorities.

My family's journey began with my Ukrainian grandparents and eldest aunt (an infant at the time), who were left with no other option but to flee the only nation they had ever known, seeking refuge in a camp in Austria during World War II. While residing in the camp, my grandparents had their second child. Leaving Austria, they fled to Brazil, where my mother was born and raised. My grandparents' work in Brazil was often not enough to provide sufficient nourishment for their three daughters, a painful childhood memory shared by my mother and aunts. Although my mother's childhood in Brazil was not free from hardship, the embracing and spirited community was truly uplifting. From the neighborhood dog, Gringo, greeting my mother at her school window to playing with neighborhood children in the street, the simple childhood experiences that she found gratifying were brought to an abrupt stop when she became an immigrant on her 13th birthday.

As a young Brazilian immigrant in the United States, my mother worked in a sweatshop during her summer vacations to help purchase a house and provide for her family. She attended public schools in an urban community that did not offer ESL classes or any form of academic support for nonnative speakers of English. Consequently, at the age of 13, she was placed into a first-grade classroom and faced discrimination from teachers and classmates. Difficult experiences such as these bolstered her self-determination to learn English, and she did so by studying a dictionary and reading any books she could find. Reflecting upon this difficult experience with my mother affected how I take into account the unique backgrounds and learning styles of each and every student in my classroom. This has also affected my research on how educators across disciplines can work collaboratively to facilitate learning experiences and improve our pedagogical practices with a common goal of promoting global social justice.

The challenges my family experienced, coupled with the meshing of cultures and languages, enabled me to a gain a deeper understanding of diversity. The unique

learning experiences linguistic minorities encounter and the pedagogies we implement should serve to support our students in their effort to become lifelong learners. As a victim of discrimination and a witness of racial and ethnic prejudices against my mother and peers during my formative years, I learned and continue to learn how to approach language pedagogy. Helping learners experience language as a form of culture can support and encourage social justice practices.

My informal knowledge also stems from my experiences in urban public schools during my preteenage years. During my youth, I was fortunate to be exposed to and learn from my multicultural and multilingual family and community. Nevertheless, attending elementary school and a few months of middle school in an urban public school system was also a difficult experience. The academic support systems were underfunded and dedicated and creative educators were faced with an immeasurable pedagogical task. My parents' decision to move from our urban home to a suburban community flipped my world upside-down, experiencing two completely different worlds within one region.

My middle and high school experiences in a nationally ranked blue ribbon school district in an affluent suburb helped pave the way for my initial stages of personal involvement within social justice studies. This school system provided me with an exceptional academic program, extraordinary educational resources, and the opportunity to meet many international students. However, it also exposed me to the harsh realities nonnative speakers face in secondary school settings: a world of isolation and the discrimination new students can face entering another community. Although my personal experiences cannot compare to the struggles many nonnative speakers face in a new nation, I have, nevertheless, felt the powerful discriminatory actions and words from others. Shoved into a locker by two older male students while gathering my books and verbally ridiculed for my urban roots are just a few examples of my experiences as a new student in a suburban middle school. These personal experiences have, undoubtedly, transformed my pedagogical approaches that enabled me to examine the learner as critical participant in the formation of a collaborative learning environment, which radiates a co-construction of knowledge-building and diverse experiences from each member.

With a determination to study the complexities of social justice and diversity through language and pedagogical studies during my undergraduate career, I opted to major in Spanish and minor in linguistics and education. By observing classes in ESL and Spanish in affluent suburban to underrepresented secondary schools, I gained additional formal theoretical knowledge of academic and social inequities. My graduate studies in Spanish applied linguistics and collaborations with faculty and peers from around the world triggered my profound research interest in interdisciplinary pedagogies, intercultural competency, linguistic minorities, social justice, and affective factors in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Additionally, my teaching experiences and learning from my high school, undergraduate, and graduate students in disciplines including ESL, Spanish, and linguistics in urban and suburban settings furthered my research interests. My personal background and my teaching and research experiences

resulted in my commitment to promoting social justice in all of my classes. Social justice pedagogies begin in my classes by guiding students to explore beyond the classroom and textbook contexts and examine the social justice issues surrounding immigration and language in local and global contexts.

Accordingly, the subsequent section will review three primary areas: the role of the undocumented immigrant as linguistic minority; social justice education; and intercultural competence skill development and service-learning pedagogies.

Relevant Literature

Natural disasters, poverty, wars, and violence narrowly exemplify conditions that can precipitate immigration. According to a study from the Pew Research Center, reports from U.S. Homeland Security indicate that the number of unaccompanied children detained at the U.S. border has almost doubled in less than one year as a result of extreme poverty in Guatemala and escalating drug and gang violence in El Salvador and Honduras (Gonzalez-Barrera, Krogstad, & Lopez, 2014). While the Spanish-speaking population currently represents a linguistic minority in the United States, Chandler (2014) notes that the population is "the fastest growing immigrant group" in the nation, evidencing the urgent need to develop equitable access to educational resources (p. 1).

It is also equally important to note that undocumented minors come from other nations, including (but not limited to) Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Taiwan (Chan, 2010, p. 29). Each group encompasses different official languages and dialects and a multitude of unique cultures. Many undocumented individuals in the United States face obstacles, including "poverty, assimilation, language barriers, violence in their community or home environment, lack of access to health care, and mental health issues" (Eusebio & Mendoza, n.d., p. 5). In the same vein, Chung, Bemak, and Grabosky (2011) report that intolerance has ensued as a result of "discussions about undocumented groups [which] include myths and stereotypes of immigrants that consist of the wide-sweeping misperceptions that most immigrants have entered the U.S. illegally; are taking non-immigrants' jobs; misusing resources and services; hurting the economy" (p. 88). These misperceptions, in turn, impede global progress and prevent social recognition.

Recognition, according to Honneth (2003), "locates the core of all experiences of injustice in the withdrawal of social recognition, in the phenomena of humiliation and disrespect" (p. 134). Curricula that lack recognition of a learner's language background, for instance, can impede literacy development. Research consistently shows that educating linguistic minority children in a second language (L2) prior to a child's development of a first language (L1) can result in detrimental effects (e.g., developmental, psychological, linguistic), emphasizing the need for additive L2 learning (as opposed to L1 replacement) (Cummins, 1984; Hickey & Ó Cainín, 2001; Magga, Nicolaisen, Trask, Dunbar, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2005; Ovando, Combs, &

Collier, 2006). For instance, Yoshikawa's (2011) study on early development of illegal immigrants' children revealed that these children exhibited substantially low language and cognitive developmental levels because of numerous factors, including a lack of opportunities for L1 development. Thus, there is a growing need to provide supportive learning environments through bilingual and multilingual forms of instruction.

Although the development of bilingual and multilingual programs may be viewed as an insurmountable task, Magga, Nicolaisen, Trask, Dunbar, and Skutnabb-Kangas (2005) identify several countries that have implemented these types of programs in an effort to provide pedagogies that encourage multilingualism and, at the same time, lead to high academic achievement levels and increased support for learners' identity expression. Thus, there is an increased global need to promote cultural and linguistic awareness and develop innovative curricula that encompass social justice education. As defined by Bell (2007), *social justice education* refers to "an interdisciplinary conceptual framework for analyzing multiple forms of oppression and a set of inter-active, experiential pedagogical principles to help learners understand the meaning of social difference and oppression both in the social system and in their personal lives" (p. 2). Hence, social justice education diversifies learners' experiences via encouraging social recognition, self-reflection, collaborative dialogue, and development of critical thinking skills, each of which allows learners to meaningfully build upon their inter-cultural competence skills.

Intercultural competence has been defined as the "effective management of interac-tion between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 7). Intercultural competence extends beyond awareness and entails cultural sensitivity and effective use of intercultural skills that contribute to social justice practices. Intercultural competence includes critical thinking skill development and self-reflection to evolve from an ethnocentric perspective by means of critical evaluation of an intercultural context for effective communicative practices. From social recognition to critically examining societal power imbalances and individual attitudes, thoughts, and actions within diverse social contexts, language educators can transform educational experiences with a goal of engaging all participants by design-ing cross-cultural classroom environments that integrate the cultural and linguistic complexities of an interaction.

For example, in an ESL classroom setting, learners can self-reflect on the role of language and culture in professional contexts in both their native homeland and the United States. Following this critical self-reflection, learners can participate in role-play exchanges with native speakers of English in professional contexts. These interactive exchanges can help learners apply learned cultural and linguistic practices in an interaction. As a concluding activity, learners and native speakers can collectively reflect on the role of social differences in interactions and generate strategies that can eliminate oppression in professions and society. These tasks provide supportive con-texts for individual transformation by linking social justice education to intercultural competence skill development. Connecting these two frameworks in the classroom

can enable all participants to examine diverse social and oppressive conditions within and outside of the classroom context.

These types of intercultural competence building strategies serve as a key element in social justice foreign language and L2 education (Lojacono, 2013). Broadly defined, *foreign* language (FL) contexts principally refer to an environment in which the learner lacks exposure to the target language outside of class (e.g., French class in the United States), whereas L2 contexts are those that refer to exposure within and outside of the classroom setting (e.g., ESL class in the United States). While many FL classes in the United States serve as either core requirements or optional coursework, one important role of L2 classes is to develop L2 proficiency for academic and/or professional success. Nevertheless, some FL and L2 educators share a common goal of reforming educational programs and promoting social justice awareness through increased intercultural competence skill development.

Since FL and L2 educators often serve as a learner's first encounter with the target language (Hawkins & Bonny, 2009), educators can co-construct interactive classrooms that extend beyond the classroom context to include diverse cultural values and linguistic norms within societies to enhance intercultural skill development (as in the previously reviewed role-play example). Moreover, institutions that offer both FL and L2 courses are ideal learning spaces to connect all learners in a multitude of intercultural tasks that address and apply social justice practices. Bridging the FL and L2 context gaps by using collaborative exchanges between learners within each group is one way that FL and L2 educators can encourage a community of lifelong learners while fostering social justice learning and developing learners' intercultural competence.

Constructing this community of FL and L2 learners within a *transformative social justice* framework, "calls on people to develop a process of social and individual conscientization" (Torres, 2008, p. 7). Within this framework, Paulo Freire's (1979) use of the concept of *conscientização* represents a "método pedagógico de libertação dos camponeses analfabetos" (a pedagogical method that liberates illiterate peasants) (p. 8). In essence, this means that through education the illiterate can be freed from oppression. In both FL and L2 contexts, *conscientização* begins by exposing learners to social oppression to raise awareness of marginalization of linguistic minorities with primary goals of actively involving all learners to develop new perspectives on language as culture and to collaboratively engage in solutions to combat oppression in society.

Transformative social justice learning facilitates social transformation and self-reflection and enables learners to understand and learn about themselves and the world while "promoting positive cross-national and cross-cultural understanding" (Osborn, 2006, p. 17). As in the previous role-play example, connecting FL and L2 learners within and outside of the classroom context facilitates a global understanding of individual experiences. This can help reshape attitudes toward undocumented individuals through these meaningful learning experiences for learners in FL and ESL studies. In light of the current research on social justice learning, the following section will explore two classroom practices (SL and online tasks) that promote social justice learning.

Classroom Practices

From isolated to inner-city communities, globalization has touched all aspects of societies around the world. Nevertheless, social justice within the global community has not been easily practiced. The classroom practices reviewed in this section serve to encourage learners within and outside of the classroom context to seek new collaborative experiences as lifelong learners.

Service learning (SL) can function as a path for all participants to engage in meaningful discourse. SL can be defined as "a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112). SL enables learners and community members to become active participants, benefitting all involved in a co-construction of diverse and meaningful experiences.

Research (Green, 2001; Hale, 1999; Overfield, 1997; Pak, 2010) on SL has revealed numerous advantages in language learning, including students' and community members' increased development of the target language and cultural cognizance. Additionally, SL can serve to develop linguistic and cultural understandings of segregated community members. Research (Gunnarsson, 2013; Roberts, 2007) indicates minimal opportunities for L2 cultural and linguistic development for immigrants with low-paying jobs, since these individuals face increased isolation from majority language groups in these particular workplaces. Thus, SL offers meaningful opportunities to learn from one another through active engagement among all participants.

SL has also faced critical analyses (Hesford, 2005), since it can also present challenges without methodical task development. Nevertheless, SL can be an effective tool that can offer cultural and linguistic interactive exchanges and promote development of FL and ESL skills.

As noted in the previous section, SL can have a powerful effect on learners and community members. In many ways, SL is a pedagogical tool that integrates a form of performative instruction, which uses "unique elements in each classroom [to create] space for change, invention, [and] spontaneous shifts" (Hooks, 1994, p. 11). As a performative pedagogy, SL allows students and community members to collaboratively incorporate personal perspectives in spontaneous and continuous dialogue that can, in turn, promote social transformation. SL can take place in various contexts that help learners and community members in a reciprocal and global learning process. For these reasons, the author implements SL pedagogical methods in university courses with an ultimate goal of promoting social justice in linguistics and FL studies. Students in these SL courses are assigned to serve at a U.S. Homeland Security facility housing undocumented families.

During the SL, students are given an option to complete various interdisciplinary tasks that address their major field of study with specific guidelines provided by the educator. Interdisciplinary tasks can include FL and/or L2 instruction and health

literacy initiatives. This SL program can be implemented in various university courses including ESL, FL, health sciences, law, and teacher education. Depending on the course, numerous interdisciplinary tasks can be implemented to help prepare students for SL tasks and achieve predetermined course goals.

Prior to beginning SL, for example, have students identify five pertinent concepts on social justice. Specifically, students write what the concept of *language* signifies to them. Next, students define *culture*. Then, ask students to explain whether these two particular concepts are connected and how they are (or are not) related. Following this, students define the concept of *identity* and discuss whether this term correlates with the previous two. After defining these concepts, students define the concepts of *immigrant* and, finally, *justice*. The purpose of the specific, one-by-one ordering of these concepts is to avoid any potential influence on their reflections about the subsequent concept. Students share their definitions in pairs; then the class gathers to reflect and discuss the five concepts. After their SL, each student revises his or her definitions of the five concepts and shares this new knowledge and experience with the class.

Throughout their SL program, students keep journals in which to reflect on their daily experiences and make connections to course topics. In the journal, students also include newly learned cultural and/or linguistic elements and questions and/or comments about their SL and the course. At the end of the semester, they submit their SL journals and conduct a research investigation in which each student posits a research question (based on the course and SL program) for their final research paper. Students' research included topics on various forms of oppression, its consequences on society, and methods that seek to improve current conditions.

Research examples included the effects of educational policies on linguistic minorities in the United States and the European Union, factors that influence language attitudes and legal rights implications in the United States, and comparative analyses of linguistic minorities and healthcare policies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The course and SL enabled students to identify specific research areas of interest that allowed them to examine human experiences across societies. Students who participated in the SL reported positive learning experiences serving undocumented adults and children. The undocumented adults and children looked forward to meeting with students on a daily basis to share their personal stories and struggles to immigrate to the United States.

The undocumented children, for example, excitedly anticipated the arrival of students. As their guide, I help my students create SL activities for undocumented children and adults that U.S. Homeland Security facility officials authorize as acceptable. For example, undocumented children's SL activities included reading exercises and writing summaries based on my students' personally selected children's books in English. Following these exercises, the children reflect on creating their own short narrative or reflect on one of their favorite books in written and oral forms in English.

Depending on the course, these activities are also completed in Spanish to further undocumented children's L1 development and also promote social recognition of the

target language. This step also supports FL students with additional Spanish language practice. Adult activities have included oral and written activities on a variety of topics including (but not limited to) soccer, music, health literacy, and personal background information on their native homeland and journey to the United States. Most of the undocumented families at the facility noted that they attempted to escape domestic abuse situations or crime-infested communities or wanted to provide academic opportunities for their child or children. For example, one individual from South America noted that he came with his 15-year-old daughter to try to provide her with a better quality of life in the United States. His wife had already reached the United States, prior to their arrival. He and his daughter were detained at an international airport and sent to the facility. While these difficult experiences can never be erased, he and a number of adults at the facility noted that the residents looked forward to the SL activities and interactions. These encounters were the only possible interactions the residents had with the community. Many students said that these encounters contributed to intercultural skill development and also cultivated new learning experiences that fostered a socially just environment. Without SL, access to the outside world is impossible for the residents, just as it is impossible for students to access and become exposed to undocumented individuals' perspectives and experiences.

These are just a few types of several SL program interactions that cannot be duplicated in a classroom context. Students shared their perspectives at the end of the semester and noted how the SL served as a transformative experience that altered their perspectives on the role of language in society. Students learned that language is a complex form of culture that shapes an individual's identity. Students who themselves are immigrants or whose parents are recent immigrants also expressed how working with undocumented families transformed their perspectives on the undocumented individual.

Incorporating online resources is another way to promote lifelong learning outside of the classroom environment. Online tasks create collaborative learning spaces, helping learners "transmit their skills and knowledges to fellow students and teachers alike" (Kahn & Kellner, 2008, p. 29). For example, integrating songs from various websites (e.g., SoundCloud, iTunes) featuring vernacular English and dialects of English not only can serve to broaden students' understanding of English varieties but also can contribute to global tolerance and social justice awareness through exposure to cultural and linguistic diversities in the ESL classroom setting (Poteau, 2012). Additionally, students can practice listening and reading skills while gaining cultural knowledge of unique instruments within a song. Students and educators can incorporate global music in the classroom and share personal interests while practicing writing skills. As an online task, links to specific music videos can be posted on a course blog or online discussion board to give learners a way to gain visual exposure to various cultural elements (e.g., communities, instruments). After watching the music video, students can post comments and questions on a course blog or online discussion board. Students can also post their own links to music videos on a course blog or discussion board describing how the song embodies an aspect of their culture.

As a social justice pedagogical approach, this task embraces an inclusive and collaborative learning environment that allows learners to incorporate personal cultural elements. Class members gain opportunities to address social identity misrepresentations and eradicate stereotypes. After each student posts a music video link, students can stream the videos and post comments and questions on the blog or online discussion board to reflect on cultures, human identities, and societies. With a social justice aim, songs can promote tolerance of multicultural identities and increase cultural awareness by shaping a community of learners who recognize and value diverse social identities in our global community. This activity consists of a series of collaborative tasks that diversifies learners' cultural experiences with exercises in listening, reading, and writing.

For example, I integrate music and cultural videos from around the world in FL and L2 contexts, some of which include footage of the *favelas* (impoverished communities throughout Brazil) and instruments that are unique to Brazil. In FL and L2 contexts, music and videos can serve as powerful tools that provide learners with meaningful experiences of social justice issues in lyrics and/or visual imagery. Depending on the course, translations of song lyrics may need to be provided. After class discussions on the music, students post their own links on our discussion board with descriptions of their posted musical video and its social justice importance. Following this, peers are asked to respond to each other by posting comments and questions about the song, instruments, artists, region, or anything that sparked curiosity, and about how the selected piece influenced their thoughts on social justice and diversity.

Using online links to poems in FL and L2 classrooms is another task that offers diverse experiences and perspectives on immigration and social justice. Songs and online links can foster collaborative and meaningful learning environments, since many FL and L2 texts feature limited authentic connections to global societies. Hence, while many ESL texts highlight isolated cases of immigrant stories, online resources can offer educators a wide array of useful and pertinent resources. For example, in Gulliver's (2010) review of the immigration success stories provided in 24 ESL texts used in government-funded language classes in Ontario, he concludes that "these stories of newcomers legitimate the pain that newcomers experience by representing these hardships as inevitable but transitional economic struggles and character-building experiences that will transform them into hard-working and successful members of the national community" (p. 741). He argues that educators are responsible for implementing resources and employing pedagogies that consider diverse immigrant experiences that do not delineate a single experiential pattern. Similarly, Taylor (2006) highlights various forms of cultural racism in ESL curricula that marginalize students by presenting culture as otherness and failing to take into account cultural diversities of English language learners. Thus, online resources can provide educators with a multitude of appropriate literary texts that foster a collaborative learning environment that encourages learners to actively participate and share personal perspectives.

Examples of poems on social justice for university-level courses in ESL include those written by undocumented Asian American college students, which can be

found on *Hyphen Magazine: Asia America unabridged* website; Jimmy Santiago Baca's "Immigrants in our own land"; and Christy Namee Eriksen's "What does an illegal immigrant look like?" As a pre-reading exercise, students can develop their own interpretations of what they expect to read and learn, beginning with the title of the selected poem. As students read the selected poem, students can list new words presented in the poem to increase vocabulary development and begin analysis of the poem. Analysis can include identifying tone, imagery, symbolic elements, and structure. Next, students can reflect on the selected poem and share their thoughts (e.g., identifying contrasts between experiences) with the class on oppression and social justice issues presented in the poem. As a closing activity, students can write their own poem to creatively express their personal story on oppression and social justice, which they can share with peers during class or by virtually posting their work on a privately maintained online class blog or discussion board.

The classroom practices reviewed do not serve simply to build cultural or linguistic appreciation. These practices serve also to build socially just and tolerant global societies that enable all to flourish in an equitable and impartial community.

Conclusion

While educators are aware of misrecognition and administrative academic tracking errors (Callahand, 2005; North, 2006; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000) because of an individual's linguistic background, it is possible to collaboratively implement new interdisciplinary programs that provide each learner with equitable learning environments. As SL programs can offer students a multilingual, multicultural approach to social justice learning through intercultural competence development, online resources can also serve to encourage a diverse learning opportunity to explore and reflect. Cultivating a social justice learning environment with an interdisciplinary approach promotes global lifelong learning. Taking the classroom to the community with SL and bringing learners together in virtual contexts serve to provide pedagogies, experiences, access, collaboration, and equality (PEACE) in our globally changing world.

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