

Educational Tourism: A Strategy for Understanding Emergent Bilinguals Learning Differences to Improve Pedagogy, Policy and Practices in Global Context

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to influence public opinion, promote critical thinking, and maybe cause people to take action that will move the agenda forward that is currently reported in the article, Tearing Down Walls: Migration, Language, Culture, Literacy and Policy in Global Contexts by Joyce Pittman [1] who experienced teaching, learning and growing up as a minority in USA and has been privileged to travel globally to improve conditions of learning for others [1]. As the researcher, my agenda emerged from extensive experience in educational leadership, research and teaching positions in Middle Eastern, African and European nations while advocating and collaborating with many people from different cultures and language backgrounds. My work with ministries of education was aimed towards expanding research and pedagogy for new curriculum in post-secondary or adult education to advance language development programs for teachers and educators to systematically transform education in practice. I learned that such an agenda must include use of modern technologies for virtual and real-time visits to immigrant communities in USA and to other countries to build trust relationships.

While developing policy, business and educational plans, more important is including in these plans goal for 1) developing trust relationships through cultural understanding and 2) recognition of ELLs learning proficiencies that come with them to this new English learning arena and 3) researchers, business leaders and advocates for improving Language learning programs must embrace the need for change. For example in their book, Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Language Learners, authors Ofelia Garcia and Jo Anne Kleifgen [2] suggest reframing or changing referring to English language learners as ELLs but as "emergent bilingual learners". These researchers believe such a change could help mediate attitudes and perceptions of ELLs as being deficient, which often leads to inequities in education in classrooms [2].

Many agree that this term, emergent bilingual could be a key to building or improving pedagogical and communication strategies for effective cooperation in teaching and learning environments for immigrants and USA learners. In essence, this editorial is both a practice, experiential and researched based position by the author to present supporting and opposing dialogue on this timely topic given recent rhetoric involving immigration policies and practices worldwide. While writing this article, through personal and professional outreach opinions of other professionals were invited. One such comment returned after reading the draft article was: This article shares critical, research-based information about planning, content, design, development, implementation, and useful research and tools for all participants - Margaret Jones, Journal of Tourism & Hospitality

Building Trust – Foundational Concepts to Bridge Cultural Differences

People, educators and learners who are not culturally trained or

who have not traveled or connected in real time with individuals from different countries or cultures often make mistakes when meeting someone from a different culture for the first time (a.k.a. cultural divide). Some ideas to consider in developing your plans to improve communicating with or teaching ELLs include:

1. Interaction fosters communication and trust,
2. Building relationships often involve non-learning interaction or subject topics (More personal topics often emerge in conversations),
3. Trust evolves with time as the team develops relationships,
4. Perception of a shared language is often misunderstood,
5. English is the global language of the world. This is why it is so important,
6. False sense or similarities or stereotypes erodes to misinterpretation of behavior of learners in the classrooms or between colleagues,
7. Perceptions of other cultures play a major role in one's approach to creating inclusive and effective diverse pedagogy,
8. Must practice patience and empathy with the different cultural differences,
9. Diversity in body language,
10. How we make sense of world depends on culture,
11. (Being friendly to people you do not know might be considered odd or even rude in some cultures),
12. Learn about the language of communication,
13. Understanding that many behaviors are culturally driven (eye contact in some cultures is seen as being rude--others it may imply trustworthiness),
14. How we make sense of the worlds depends on our culture and language to a great extent.

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Suggestions for Educators/Teachers

1. As teachers, it is important that we recognize our own learning styles, language, literacy and cultural assumptions, because these styles and assumptions influence how we teach and what we expect from our students. Being aware of them allows us to develop a more inclusive teaching style.
2. As you plan your mini-lesson, course, or a class, prepare multiple examples to illustrate your points. Try to have these examples reflect different cultures, experiences, sexual orientations, genders, etc., to include all students in learning.
3. Explain how your strategies help students move between abstract, theoretical knowledge and concrete, specific experiences, to expand everyone's learning.
4. Use different teaching methods (lectures, small groups, discussions, collaborative learning) to meet the variety of learning needs.

Conclusion

A realistic solution(s) to the problem goes beyond common or learned knowledge. Approaches to new curriculum to improve

language learning must encourage critical thinking and pro-active reaction. Global educators and learning teams deserve to pay attention to different cultural nuances that exist around the world –many rooted in the culture and language including the many different Englishes! For example: Some Arabic and Asian languages and cultures depend on body language and other nonverbal communication as does English speakers. Keep in mind some words do not even exist in other languages.

Therefore, we must eliminate thinking centered on “them” to “we or us” for a more inclusive learning environment to improve relationships through communication practices. An effective approach to incorporating Educational Tourism as a Strategy for Understanding Emergent Bilinguals Learning Differences could help Improve Pedagogy, Policy and Practices in Global Context. For more on this topic, follow Pittman's article, Tearing Down Walls: Migration, Language, Culture, Literacy and Policy in Global Contexts published in this issue.

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