

Tearing Down Walls: Migration, Language, Culture, Literacy and Policy in Global Contexts

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Abstract

This paper introduces learners, teachers, educators and stakeholders to a complex of socio-political contexts in which TIE-SOL [teaching in English to speakers of other languages] is embedded in the education and related experiences. The methodology includes the author's experiential knowledge weaved with extensive research and literature to explore language teaching as a set of practices situated in, and constitutive of wider social and political relations manifest through policies influencing migration, culture, language and literacy. The context includes ESL administration, curriculum and pedagogy, such as multicultural, immigration, indigenous and racism policies that often crosses borders. Educational and language policy 'contexts' are explored for what they include and what they exclude; for their influence, or lack of, on the framing of second or least commonly taught language teaching and learning encountered by immigrants, and ultimately not limited to ELL/TESL teacher and learner identity but all teachers and learners. In this writing, we are concerned with teaching and learning in a country in which English is the dominant language of a substantial, often monolingual, majority and learners need English to communicate in their daily life. As such, the paper aims to enlarge the view-point of Andragogy and Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching and Less Commonly Taught Languages by transitioning theory to practice through exploring the relationships between elements of social and political contexts such as students right to own language (SROL) and the impact upon language pedagogy, theory and professional practice in global education. The outcomes or results culminate as the researcher recommends a platform to improve planning, designing and implementing professional development and training for leaders, teachers, educators and individual to inform them about the impact that practice-based Pedagogy can have in eradicating language barriers that often affect the quality of life and learning for all people (296 words).

Keywords: Immigration; Migration; LCTL-Less commonly taught languages; ELL-English language Learners; TESL-Teachers of english as second language; Pedagogy; Literacy; Pedagogy; ESL-English as second language

Introduction

This study recaps highlights from research that includes a primary focus on three areas that inform the importance of appropriate planning and design to develop curriculum in adult, post-secondary or K-12 education to advance language development programs, English skills and cooperation for educating immigrants who enter the USA or other countries. In this paper, relevant literature on the study's subject, the proposed approach and solution are established from research, which shares critical information about planning, content, design, development and implementation to address the problem of inadequate integration of language training opportunities for immigrants who are immersed in an educational or training environment that mandates English as the foundation language with limited opportunities to learn English in context. The subtopics are:

- Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
- Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
- From Theory to Practice – Addressing Less commonly Taught Languages Policies and Pedagogical Practices (LCTL-PPP-TP)

Problem Background

Research shows that approximately ninety-one percent of Americans who study foreign languages in our schools, colleges, and universities choose French, German, Italian, or Spanish; while only nine percent choose languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Yoruba,

Russian, Swahili and the other languages spoken by the overwhelming majority of people around the world. While many of the less commonly taught languages are critically important to our national and international interest in the 21st century, the low level of current enrollments jeopardizes the very existence of the relatively few existing programs, and significantly restricts access to language learning opportunities for the large majority of students in the United States [1].

Case-in-point: Imagine you have been selected to represent your country on a newly formed UN Task Force on migration, language and literacy policy in global contexts to develop a training program or courses to improve transition of ELL learners into a culture where English is the dominant language. You have been asked to serve in the capacity of an expert on education and will represent your organization or community (your school if you are a teacher, your company/organization if you are employed as an administrator or your university if you are a full-time student). The taskforce has been specifically charged with mainstreaming a language and policy perspective into a learning environment appropriate for integrating into the U.S. educational system.

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What questions or competencies could be required of you to implement this important charge?

Every year thousands of adult education instructors, postsecondary educators and K-12 teachers enter places of learning and teaching to face this conundrum in our increasingly online classrooms and traditional classrooms. In a policy brief, research reported almost a decade ago by the National Council on the Teaching of English (NCTE), declared there “are many faces of English Language Learners (ELLs).” Some statistics provide evidence supporting this declaration [2].

ELLs are the fastest growing segment of the student population

The highest growth occurs in grades 7-12, where ELLs increased by approximately 70 percent between 1992 and 2002. ELLs now comprise 10.5 percent of the nation’s K–12 enrollments, up from 5 percent in 1990.

ELLs do not fit easily into simple categories; they comprise a very diverse group

Recent research shows that 57 percent of adolescent ELLs were born in the U.S., while 43 percent were born elsewhere. ELLs have varied levels of language proficiency, socio-economic standing, and expectations of schooling, content knowledge, and immigration status.

ELL students are increasingly present in all U.S states

Formerly, large ELL populations were concentrated in a few states, but today almost all states have populations of ELLs. States in the Midwest and Intermountain West have seen increases in the number of ELL students; in Illinois, for example, enrollments of Hispanic undergraduates grew by 80 percent in the last decade. Nationwide, approximately 43 percent of secondary educators teach ELLs.

ELLs sometimes struggle academically

In 2005, 4 percent of ELL eighth graders achieved proficiency on the reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) versus 31 percent of all eighth graders who were found to be proficient. Non-native English speakers 14–18 years old were 21 percent less likely to have completed high school than native English speakers [3]).

The literature Review unveiled 17 major themes and 4 major sub-themes emerged in this review of 204 resources to support the evolution of this conceptual framework. Following Table 1 is a discussion highlighting the importance of three significant themes and three critical questions that could be studied to further expand research to improving planning and delivery of education in ways that eliminate or minimize language as a barrier to equal and fair opportunity for learning by all learners but especially ELL/TESL learners and immigrants (Figure 1).

Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)

Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education reports “Community colleges are among the largest providers of adult education ESL/ELL service in many states and communities. ESL/ELL instruction for adults is the largest and fastest growing component of America’s adult education system—representing more than 40 percent of enrollments and more than 1.2 million students per year—and the fastest growing program of any kind at many community colleges.” To find out more about community college’s role in providing immigrant education programs and other fast facts concerning the immigrant population go here [4].

According to research, “on numerous occasions, UNESCO has been invited by its Member States to monitor national and regional policies on language protection and language planning for building multilingual societies. Language policy is seen as a powerful political instrument for the promotion of the co-existence of multilingualism. International normative instruments such as conventions, treaties or recommendations can be reinforced at the national level if comprehensive language policies are developed, concrete measures are introduced, resources are allocated, and effective tools are used by all stakeholders concerned.”[5].

However, a college or university foreign language requirement might affect the foreign language classroom by mandating a particular set of languages rather than allowing learners the freedom or flexibility of choice for the language they choose to learn [6]. My research found that an individual’s decision to learn a language is prompted by different types of motivators or expectations that in many cases are

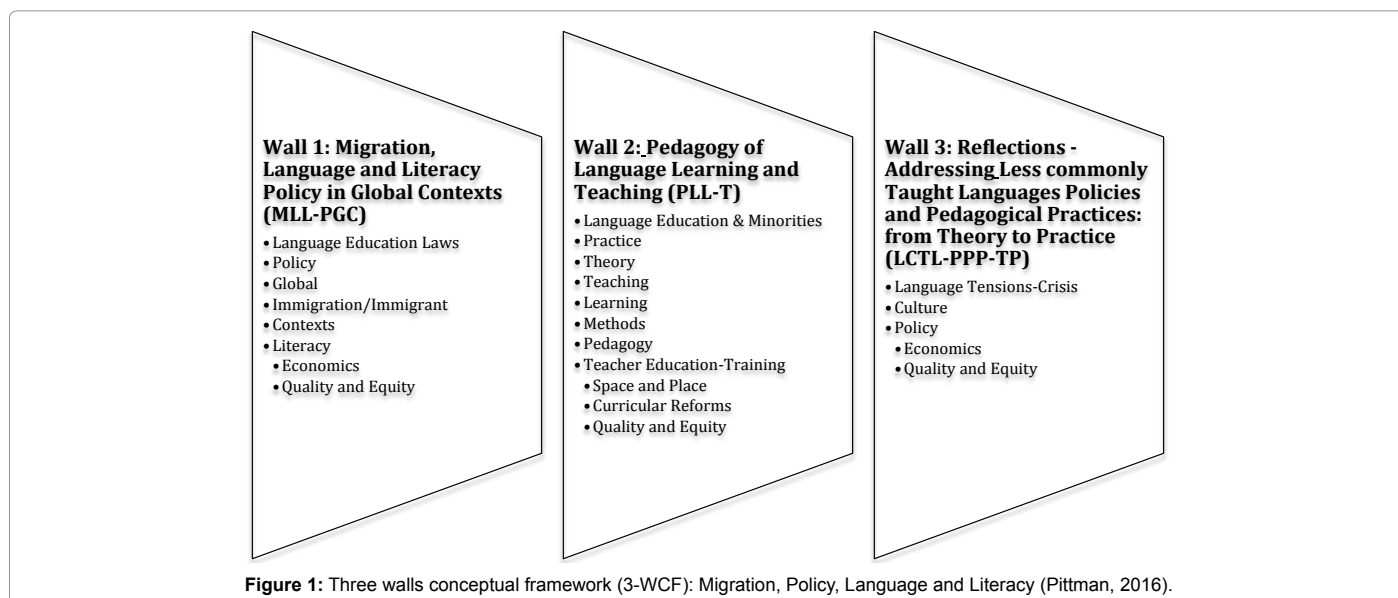


Figure 1: Three walls conceptual framework (3-WCF): Migration, Policy, Language and Literacy (Pittman, 2016).

Search Terms	Frequency (N=)	Module/Strand Dominance
Language	292	All three (3)
1. Policy	170	Module 1: Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
2. Culture	42	Module 3: Reflections - Addressing Less commonly Taught Languages Policies and Pedagogical Practices: from Theory to Practice (LCTL-PPP-TP)
3. Practice	37	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
4. Theory	25	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
5. Global	29	Module 1: Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
6. Teaching	27	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
7. Learning	17	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
8. Methods	12	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
9. Pedagogy	7	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
10. Immigration/Immigrant	7	Module 1: Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
11. Contexts	6	Module 1: Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
12. Literacy	4	Module 1: Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
13. Teacher Education	4	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
14. SUMMARY		
Module 1	5 (2 nd emphasis)	Module 1: Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts (MLL-PGC)
Module 2	7 (1 st emphasis)	Module 2: Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)
Module 3	1 (3 rd emphasis)	Module 3: Reflections - Addressing Less commonly Taught Languages Policies and Pedagogical Practices: from Theory to Practice (LCTL-PPP-TP)

Table 1: Literature Review Course Emphasis via Search Terms Frequency: Articles, Books, Reports.

very personal in nature. For example, immigrant students who come from mixed ethnic backgrounds may want to learn the language of their parents' mother country.

Language policy driving the culture of learning and teaching is rooted in American values. Research shared by NCOLCTL found that the one value that nearly every American would agree upon is individual freedom. Whether you call it individual freedom, individualism, or independence, it is the cornerstone of American values. It permeates every aspect of our society. According to Grouling, 2016 major legislative decisions that affects education include decisions that support four critical American values: Individual freedom, education choice, family and privacy. All the values are centered on the protection of individual freedom stemming from the U.S. Constitution. In addition, training and research by the NCOLCTL found that educational legislation related to educating immigrants also relate to U.S. history: ...the immigrant as the "self-made man" and the rugged conquest of the western frontier. They relate too to the family, whether it is founded in religion or in social structure, and education, whose goal is to create responsible literate citizens. Education is considered life-long as suggested by the American adage "be all that you can be" which is traceable to the Protestant heritage of the country [7].

Some common misconceptions about ELL learning can be found by searching myths and misconceptions about ELL learners. By visiting this Best Practices for ELLs Website, eight misconceptions and research findings clarify by citing research findings [8].

Major concerns around ELL learners include the question of immigrants' right to learn or communicate in their own language. In addition, research shows that ELL learners benefit more when English is spoken or practiced in the home. While this is desirable, some cultures and family values do not always support such strategy.

Critical questions

1. Describe a variety of legal and legislative decisions and how they shape U.S. migration, literacy and English language education in global context.

2. Changing Ideas about English Language Learner Education: What are some misconceptions we can change about English language learners in K-12+ educational settings?
3. Accounting for English Language Learner Students and a Global and Multilingual World: What are some major concerns surrounding English language learner education?

Pedagogy of Language Learning and Teaching (PLL-T)

Research suggests it important to enhance teachers, educators and policymakers on conscious awareness of the cross currents between language policies and pedagogical practices that affects what goes on in learning and teaching environments on a daily basis. Therefore, research shows that teachers must be trained in how to examine their own beliefs and compare them to what their students believe—such information could be obtained either through informal discussion or by means of a more formal evaluation strategy [9]. Learning Languages in the United States requires immigrants and ELL learners to understand

- Basic American values that have influenced the U.S. educational system in the United States;
- How American values drive policy and pedagogical practices in learning situations
- Which languages are taught at which instructional levels, and initiatives to advance instruction in less commonly taught languages at all levels.

Critical questions

1. How can teachers make sound pedagogical decisions and advocate for educational policies and laws that best serve the needs of students in today's diverse classrooms?
2. What is the pedagogical value of providing culturally and linguistically diverse students greater access to their own language and cultural orientations?
3. What are some lessons that could be learned from beyond our

national borders to address critical issues of language diversity in K-12+ educational settings? For example: How is language diversity including dialecticism managed in other countries in classrooms?

From Theory to Practice - Addressing Less Commonly Taught Languages Policies and Pedagogical Practices (LCTL-PPP-TP)

Approximately ninety-one percent of Americans who study foreign languages in our schools, colleges, and universities choose French, German, Italian, or Spanish; while only nine percent choose languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Yoruba, Russian, Swahili and the other languages spoken by the overwhelming majority of people around the world.

While many of the less commonly taught languages are critically important to our national interest in the 21st century, the low level of current enrollments jeopardizes the very existence of the relatively few existing programs, and significantly restricts access to language learning opportunities for the large majority of students in the United States. National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages [10].

Critical questions

1. What strategies can teachers use to support English language learners in the classroom including LCTL learners?
2. Support for Teachers: What kinds of support for teachers can help them help ELL students?
3. How do you feel about the unpredictability about the interaction between learner and teacher in a language classroom?

As a researcher and through experience, I found that conflict in beliefs about language learning could emerge between a teacher and students during the assessment process if students and teacher expectations differ. Learner motivation could be affected if student perceived the teachers methodology was in opposition of their aptitude for learning the language vs. communication skills and opportunities provided by the teacher for student to demonstrate their proficiency in practice. This theoretical finding is supported by Schulz [11] who based on her research found important differences between the beliefs of students and teachers, offered the following recommendation for accommodating students with different beliefs in the same foreign language classroom:

Since current theories of learning and teaching emphasize student commitment to and involvement in the instructional process, it might well be wise to explore the fit of learner and teacher beliefs and take into account learner opinions of what enhances the learning process. While opinions alone do not necessarily reflect the actual cognitive processes that go on in language acquisition, perceptions do influence reality. Indeed, some would argue that perception is reality for the individual learner. Students whose instructional expectations are not met may consciously or subconsciously question the credibility of the teacher and/or the instructional approach. Such lack of pedagogical face validity could affect learners' motivation, which in turn affects the amount of time and effort they are willing to invest in the learning process and the types of activities they are willing to engage in to gain mastery (p. 349) [11].

The goal of this research is to strengthen the teaching and learning of LCTLs in the United States by providing increased professional development opportunities for postsecondary pre-service teachers, teacher educators and LCTL instructors. Through new curriculum and

revisions of teacher education methods courses, instructors could learn about current research in language teaching and teaching methods, reflect on their own and others' teaching practices, build communities of practice around language teaching immersion in practice, and strengthen their connections to professional organizations to continue their ongoing growth [12].

Results and Recommendations

Three-dimensional program platform to break down walls

The following principles can be used to stimulate discussions about how to improve opportunities and experiences of immigrants to USA and programs or curriculum to support the ELL learner. More research of standards for developing language pedagogy, culture and policy must be done to full interpret the context for incorporating the principles that simply describe important issue that could be incorporated into conceptualizing programmatic and communities of learning designs.

D1-Knowledge and understanding

- Describe social, cultural and political factors that shape Migration, Language and Literacy Policy in Global Contexts both locally and globally
- Define the role of the English language teacher and other K-16 educators beyond the classroom to include policy advocacy and critique

D2- Skills and abilities

- Identify issues and policies (literacy, migration, refugee, education, human development, multicultural, racial, etc.) that cut across TIE-SOL/LCTL pedagogical contexts.
- Evaluate the impact of language policies upon the institutions of home, school and self in global settings.

D3-Judgment and approach

- Explain the socio-political context of TIE-SOL and LCTL pedagogy and literacy in specific settings.

Identify ways to incorporate and integrate multiple cultures and languages to improve opportunities to improve citizenship and personal achievement.

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