LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AS RESOURCES FOR CREATING CLASSROOM COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING

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OUTLINE OF TODAY’S PRESENTATION

• Promoting an “asset perspective” in the school classroom
  • **Language as a resource**: Bilingualism and primary language support
  • **Culture as a resource**: Capitalizing on students’ “funds of knowledge”

• Countering a “deficit perspective” in teacher education
TYPES OF BILINGUALISM

Figure 4.2. Types of Bilingualism

Subtractive Bilingualism  Additive Bilingualism  Dynamic Bilingualism

Garcia, 2009
Common underlying proficiency refers to the interdependence of concepts, skills and linguistic knowledge found in a central processing system.

Cognitive and literacy skills established in the mother tongue or L1 will transfer across languages (Cummins, 2000)
OFFERING PRIMARY LANGUAGE SUPPORT

- Use bilingual books and labels. Get students to produce them.

- Utilize homogeneous grouping so students can problem-solve with each other in their common L1.

- Encourage discussions of class topics at home in the L1.

- Encourage code-switching in writing.

- Encourage students to explore cognates
  - 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish. For Spanish-speaking ELLs, cognates are an obvious bridge to the English language.
Today is Wednesday, November 13, 05. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving day, so I am very happy. Today Ms. Mui taught us how to make turkey. We cooked turkey and covered it with sauce. Then we decorated the turkey with decorative ribbon. Even though the turkey was not very good, I still like it. After dinner, we played games and did homework. Finally, we went to bed and closed our eyes.
FAMILY JOURNALS
POSTERS: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Yo quiero ser de grande ____.
I want to be _____ in the future.
¿Por qué?

Lo que no quiero ser de grande ____.
I don’t want to be ______________.
¿Por qué?

They brought poster board, markers, scissors, glue & magazines for kids to find pictures.
I want to be a fireman.

¿Yo quiero ser fireman?

Porque apaga el fuego y gana mucho dinero.

I don't want to be a teacher.

Lo que hacen hoy.
Funds of Knowledge

• Teachers as learners: investigating and tapping into the "hidden" home and community resources of students.

• The teachers who participated in this project reflected that the project helped them become aware of the multi-dimensional facets of their students’ lives.

• They found that the household networks had great educational potential.

• Once these networks are uncovered and mobilized for learning, they can become a social and intellectual resource for the school.

González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005
Providing engaging content and authentic literacy tasks to develop academic expertise.
FAMILIAR GAMES AS VEHICLES FOR LEARNING

• Musical chairs: “La teacher viene por los hunters” (The teachers takes the hunters)
  • Students who were left without a chair 3 times had to dance: “The chicken moves its leg, the chicken moves its wings, etc.”

• Popping balloons: With balloons tied around their ankles, students kicked to try to pop each other’s balloons
  • Winners received envelopes with words to order in sentences, e.g., “Fernando is an intelligent teacher”
“LANGUAGE-AS-A-PROBLEM”
IDEOLOGY

• Deficit perspectives
  • Bilingual education is often subtractive and viewed as “remedial,” i.e., as a bridge to English mastery
  • Language status: English as dominant
  • L2 language acquisition often diagnosed as disability
  • “El pobrecito” syndrome (E. García, 2002)
  • Rejection of “translanguaging” practices (O. García, 2009)
  • Students and families often marginalized or invisible
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS

• Make observations without making quick, critical evaluations or “leaps of judgment”

• Provide detailed contextualized descriptions and narratives based on situated experiences and events

• Examine, describe, and explain their own perspectives and learn about other ways of being. Reflect on their own journey through knowledge (emphasis on the process). (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Borg, 2010; Frank, 1999; McCarty, 2011)

• Interviews
• Case Studies
• Observations
ETHNOGRAPHIC PROJECT IN ROSARIO, ARGENTINA

- Instruction on ethnographic techniques
  - Data collection (e.g., participant observations, field notes, interviews, photographs)
  - Analysis (e.g., rich description, thematic patterning, building emerging theories).

- Topics for investigation based on interests

- Observations in settings such host families’ homes, cafés, restaurants, and parks.

- Interviews with members of host families, Spanish teachers, local acquaintances.

- Written paper
  - purpose and rationale
  - methodology
  - analysis
  - implications for their future teaching
You learn all these statistics and whatnot, you learn the strategies to help ELLs, but when you really get out there and talk to people who are living the life, you realize you really don’t know anything. I guess this assignment has opened my eyes to real life. It has shown me that when I have my own classroom I’m going to need to try a lot harder to understand my students and their families.
REFERENCES


