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# Learning about Diversity through Diversity

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*Theresa Austin, University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

## Abstract

This article will illustrate how teachers and a teacher educator design innovative programs for world language instruction using principles from sociocultural theory, postcolonial theory, and critical theory. During the course of their planning and reflections, they address issues of diversity in the U.S. and in the world as a significant factor in instructional practice. Their dialogue demonstrates that diversity cannot be framed by outmoded thinking that equates the term with realities faced by and an issue confined to “minorities.” Rather, in this chapter, our conversation introduces specific examples of how teachers can design curricula that prepare all learners to move beyond their habitual worldviews and to consider instead the multiple perspectives of users of world languages in an ever-changing environment. Concretely, this approach to diversity calls for a reframing of issues to include 1) an identity-building shift from the “tourist” to the responsible democratic citizen; 2) a shift from the frame of an individual to that of a community; and 3) a shift away from an orientation that sees diversity as problematic and towards the expectation that one will benefit from critical cross-cultural encounters with difference (“the other”). Accompanying these shifts in thinking are language instructional practices that build recognition of diversity locally and internationally. Our language programs thus use classroom diversity to understand wider circles of diversity and foment understanding of difference such that language learning engages us more critically in understanding ourselves in relation to others.

## Introduction

This article will present one example of how the process of learning *through* diversity shapes learning *about* diversity in a language teacher education program. The appreciation for diversity may be easier claimed than actually experienced in institu-

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**Theresa Austin** (Ph.D., UCLA) is the Coordinator of the Language, Literacy and Culture Concentration in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. As an associate professor, she teaches graduate seminars on ethnographic research, cross-cultural communication, language policy, curricular innovations in world languages, and courses in Spanish second language assessment and testing, and second language materials and methods. A reviewer for numerous journals, Theresa is currently the ACTFL Research SIG Chair (06-08), newsletter editor of the AERA Second Language Research SIG and co-editor with Ryuko Kubota of a special volume of the *Journal of Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*. Her current research projects examine critical race theory and critical pedagogies in world language teacher education and ideologies in policies and practices in second language academic literacy development.

tional contexts. In general, institutions are conceived as a normalizing force in any society. It is their natural function, therefore, to create and replicate both knowledge and power relations within society (Foucault, 1980). Schooling, through the use of sanctioned curricula, activities, and materials, typically replicates external societal relationships which often devalue the divergent types of knowledge that non-dominant groups create. Such divergent knowledge may likewise be disparaged in school settings. Bourdieu has called these knowledges social “capital.” A widely recognized push to reframe the school’s responsibility to all learners acknowledges not only the value of what all children bring to the classroom (constructivism) but also the need to build upon these “knowledges” to serve children and their communities at local, regional, national and even international levels (Nieto; 1999; Au, 1998; Minami & Ovando, 2004).

In world language teacher education, the normalizing forces are recognizable. Most professional development programs are obligated to seek alignment with state, national and sometimes international standards for their subject matter and grade level. As such, they become normalizing forces and exert a homogenizing effect on populations entering a teacher education program, on what those individuals learn, and thus on who is eventually accepted as a teacher. The national failure to recruit and support large numbers of language and ethnic minority candidates for the teaching profession is a result, in part, of these homogenizing forces. It is these forces that are working, unwittingly or not, to exclude numbers of language and ethnic minority candidates (Irvine, 1988; Darder, 1993; Wilberschied & Dassier, 1995; Moore, 2005). Nonetheless, attempts are being made to address the growing needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Institutional commitment with respect to these issues varies in degree. Examples of programmatic efforts to build social justice, critical multicultural, and democratic values into teacher preparation programs include creating community outreach programs for school community partnerships in learning (Solsken & Willett, 1994), actively recruiting future teachers from the paraprofessional ranks where a large number of language and ethnic minority candidates exist (Ernest, 2005, 2006; Austin & Rintell, 2006), and working to sustain in-service professional development opportunities to better serve diverse students ( Nieto, 2003; Solsken, Willett & Wilson, 2004). In less ambitious cases, efforts are limited to one lesson or course on diverse populations to satisfy a program’s “diversity requirement.” The quality of preparedness and resources that teachers can draw on to be successful in teaching children that are different from themselves depends directly on the quality of effort put forth.

These various initiatives have also produced a resistance documented at both the macro societal level and the micro level in the classroom. Gradually increasing since the late 1970’s, attacks on the preparation of teachers have included a rejection of calls to address explicitly multicultural issues as “political correctness” and “useless knowledge” (Gaarder, 1976; Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Finn, 1999). Throughout the 1990’s, concerted efforts to denigrate the value of these diversity and multicultural courses coincided with the denigration of the social capital of liberal arts, higher education, and, in particular, teacher preparation programs located in schools of education (Stotsky, 1999; US Department of Education, 2002). Ironically, businesses have

increasingly come to value such education and have implemented highly visible programs to educate employees at all ranks about antiracist policies. At the same time, federal funding has increased the participation of women and underrepresented ethnic and non-anglophone populations in math and science education, which has facilitated their entry into higher education and professionals contexts where they had previously been underrepresented. Unfortunately, this redirection of funding has come at the cost of major cuts to all “non essentials” or, in the parlance of local schools, “specials,” meaning programs in the arts, physical education, and to some extent (until recently), world languages at the elementary level, historically a place where many women have entered into professional life as teachers, administrators, counselors, etc. Thus as “gendered” and economically productive sectors in our education system open, other sectors have become vulnerable.

Today, at a time when the diversity of the student population most warrants a culturally responsive education and at a time when global matters demand critical understanding of diversity, many institutions in the U.S. have yet to be successful in raising the graduation rates of language and ethnic minorities from high schools and colleges (Moore, 2005). Wong Fillmore (1997, p.131) states “... we do a good job educating children who are judged to be capable; we do much worse than most nations with students we judge to be not very promising. It is a fact that poor and minority group students in this society are far more likely to be at the lower end of the educational scale than at the higher.” According to the authors of the most recent national study, Cochran Smith & Zeidner (2005), more than 80% of pre-teachers come from White European backgrounds and many come from suburban neighborhoods, vastly different from the communities in which they may find their first teaching assignment. For in-service teachers, the communities in which they are teaching are growing more diverse with populations that outpace national birth rate growth (Latinos and Blacks), as well as immigrants, migrants or refugees. Furthermore, as Marilyn Cochran-Smith has indicated, even teacher educators, given that most of them are also from the dominant group, may resist challenging their own assumptions about persistent social inequities that affect diverse learners’ (Cochran-Smith, 2006). This problem is compounded by the fact that the United States is often portrayed internationally as not having sufficient understanding of, much less concern with, perspectives or cultural values other than its own. Many K-12 educational institutions have had little impact upon their students’ understanding of social, political and cultural matters in a global context.

Nationally, many scholars have identified the need to address these issues, among others, Wilberschied & Dassier 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Nieto, 2004. In addition to coursework intended to prepare culturally responsive educators, Villegas and Lucas (2002) identify two pre-service program characteristics that are of particular importance for becoming a successful teacher in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms: learning experiences and fieldwork. Banks, et al., (2001, p.97) identify essential principles, in which teachers need to:

- Uncover and identify their personal attitudes towards racial, ethnic, language and cultural groups.

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- Acquire knowledge about the histories and cultures of the diverse racial, ethnic, language and cultural groups within the nation and within their schools.
- Become familiar with the diverse perspectives that exist within different ethnic and cultural communities.
- Understand the ways in which institutionalized knowledge within schools, universities, and the popular culture can perpetuate stereotypes about racial and ethnic groups.
- Acquire the knowledge and skills to develop and implement an equity pedagogy.

So how can teachers and teacher educators, and those who prepare world language teachers in particular, take these points to build classrooms that create democratic citizens who can use their language abilities to communicate productively with the diverse populations in the local and global target-language communities? How can the institution of language teacher education encourage responsiveness to interethnic, interracial, and intercultural diversity, as well as openness to educational innovations that address existent and emerging inequities in educating underserved populations? How can technical knowledge about languages and language learning be used in these neglected areas so as to address populations least served in world language education?

Given the normalizing forces of institutions, there is a modernist inclination to believe in a one-to-one relationship between their policies and their implementation. However, insights from poststructuralist theories show the inconsistencies, contradictions, and gaps that also exist in the practices of any institution, (Cherryholm, 1988), including school. Thus, in preparing teachers, we should never ignore their potential for influencing their future educational institutions. Given the potential for human agency to dynamically shape social forces through both activities and language use (Ohara, et al., 2000), modifying language use to value diversity can have a significant impact. Therefore, regardless of how strict or confining a curriculum may be for a teacher, the values expressed by that teacher through the process of instruction can affect the classroom environment and beyond in powerful ways.

As teacher educators in the FL teaching profession, we must rise to the challenge of preparing teachers who can thrive by drawing on diversity as a resource with the goal of “building new realities for diverse learners.” But even within world language-teacher education programs, depending on the level of institutional commitment to promoting equitable education to diverse populations, diversity requirements may be deeply embedded throughout the program’s entire curriculum or they may be limited to one course. Given the impact of difference and diversity on the formation of teachers themselves, as well as on their future learners, I draw on principles from socio-cultural theories, postcolonial theory, and critical theory to conceptualize content for a course I have designed to prepare teachers to develop appropriate foreign-language programs and curricula. In developing such new language programs, teachers can use classroom diversity to understand the broader diversity beyond the school walls. In other words, I want to cultivate an understanding of difference as a way not only to approach linguistic diversity but also to engage more critically in understanding oneself in relation to others “of different backgrounds.”

Below I draw on three examples of student work to illustrate the processes that occur in this the aforementioned course. I hope to show how these students conceptualize dynamic, culturally-responsive curricula which have the potential to address diversity both in our teacher education program and in their future teaching.

In the Language, Literacy and Culture practitioner program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, students select from a list of 33 credit-bearing courses that draw on various socio-cultural perspectives on language learning: sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, post-colonial theory, and feminist theories. In my course, students are given the opportunity to creatively apply ideas and theories from their previous coursework to design a summer language program. The course relies on dialogic interaction from which ideas are generated, discussed, and refined. Students then apply these concepts to the summer language program that is their curriculum design practice, and then critically reflect on their experience to assess whether they have achieved what they intended.

The course examines a variety of issues pertaining to diversity in the U.S. and the world within the context of instructional practice, such as the differences in language use that exist in any community (sociolinguistic) and how power relations impact our treatment of difference (relative inclusivity). In addition, we also look at the creative impulse that emerges from interacting with diversity of opinion: the freedom of thinking and ability to transcend previous limits of conceptualization experienced by an individual in contact with people who think and speak differently than he or she does. As such, our dialogue in this course demonstrates that diversity-responsive instruction cannot be framed by outmoded thinking equating issues of diversity with “minority” concerns (Fraynd, 2003). Rather, in this chapter, the process of considering multiple perspectives through dialogic instruction allows for participants to 1) conceptually move beyond their habitual ways of interpreting the world of language teaching and learning, 2) offer alternatives from their positions of power as program directors, and 3) reflect on the knowledge constructed through engagement with difference. The specific examples cited here are from participants who designed curricula responsible for preparing language learners to enter what has become a rapidly-changing social universe of world languages users. Concretely, this perspective on diversity calls for a reframing of curricular issues to include 1) a shift from building curricula for learners as “tourists” to one for learners as responsible citizens of the world, 2) a shift from the frame of independently functioning individual to one of participant in a community, and 3) a shift towards expecting to benefit from critical cross cultural encounters with difference (“the other”). Accompanying these shifts in thinking are language instructional practices that are built upon recognition of the immediate relevance of local and international diversity.

## **Responding to Diversity at the Program Level— A Process for Innovation**

In world language education in the U.S., we are facing a major challenge to tailor instruction about a wide variety of languages to an increasingly diverse and multilingual student population. At the same time, the national teaching force is primarily con-

stituted by a population that is increasingly and persistently from middle-and upper middle-class suburban backgrounds far removed from the experiences typical of diverse urban populations (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Melnick & Zeichner, 1998). In addition to recruiting more teachers from outside the middle-class suburbs, we must thus train the current population of teachers to view diversity as a resource.

Every semester I enter into my course on language program design and evaluation with great anticipation. This course is an elective in our teacher education master's program and is offered to help educators envision "what can be" in terms of world language or English as a Second Language curriculum. Participants are guided through planning programs of language study, shown how to advocate for their language programs at a public poster presentation, and given assignments to put their new understanding into practice. During the following semester, they refine their instructional plans, implement their language curriculum for ten days, and evaluate their students' and their own learning. Later they construct a portfolio which includes not only documentation of the process of planning their curriculum but their critical reflections throughout the experience as well. This program-design course attracts upper division undergraduates from the world language departments as well as international and local graduate students in our Language, Literacy, and Culture program.

I look forward to the program-design course because it requires a creative synthesis of the principles we teach throughout the master's level program. These principles are derived from sociocultural understandings of language as more than a "linguistic system in the mind." We work within perspectives that see language playing a significant role in shaping social interactions and language as a resource with which learners 'make sense' of the social world around them (See Hall-Kelly, 2000; Kramche, Thorne, Wong, 2006). Rather than traditional views that define language by its linguistic structures, we conceive language as an essential tool for acquiring knowledge and a constituent part of the architecture of that knowledge, both of which are changing and dynamic. Through social interactions, class members learn about language as they learn to use language to socially construct knowledge of the world and their own identities (See Norton & Toohey, 2004). 'Reading' in the sense of interpreting that social world thus helps develop their identities not as passive observers of the world but as active participants who recognize how their activities contribute to shaping that world. We try to build critical literacy in our students so they can appreciate how language works in powerful ways to shape social relations through texts. In particular, teachers need this appreciation to construct more democratic and equitable opportunities for learners to use language to shape their lives and communities (Leeman & Martinez forthcoming; Jenks, 2000; Comber, 2003).

Given that the increasing demographic diversity in the U.S. and the immediacy of global contact places a multitude of social worlds in direct contact with each other, it is essential to develop critical literacy of academic language practices or genres. Three aspects of critical literacy are identified by Luke (2000) as (1) a meta-knowledge of diverse meaning systems, (2) the socio-cultural contexts of production, and (3) the use of these meaning systems in everyday life. Teachers have to decide how knowledge, ideas, and information are being structured in different media and genres.

In the context of language teaching and learning, a “critical literacy” for teachers would include the expectation that they interpret how current instructional practices in world language classrooms operate to structure learning about language, construct world views reflective of that language’s culture, and perpetuate unchallenged assumptions about learners. I would add to this the need for developing a critically literate stance that examines opportunities to aid the individual learner’s active participation in diverse communities, through which teachers may gain access to deeper understanding of those communities (Nieto, 1999; Kubota, 2004; Kumagai, forthcoming; and Burns, 2006).

While these ideas have been taken up by the English as a second language field (Maley, 1997), they have not been as widely embraced by the world language field. Diverse perspectives about the nature of language, literacy, and critical multicultural education are cycled throughout the courses in our Master’s program. These perspectives are highlighted in several courses on assessment, curriculum for L1 & L2 literacy, content development, foundations for language, literacy and culture, classroom observation, and student teaching. In essence, the principles are 1) language and literacies are viewed as socially constructed; 2) knowledge and ideas are structured in socially recognizable genres that have consequences for those knowing how to use the genre; 3) knowing how to interpret and produce these ways of using language and literacy requires social knowledge that is gained by learners through guided experiences; and 4) preparing learners to collaborate as active culture agents in shaping their communities means building from what they bring to the course and expanding their repertoires.

## **Entering into Discussions with Diverse Academic and Social Backgrounds**

Our teacher education program includes simulated interactions that are familiar to many who have “engaged learning” activity-oriented experiences such as internships and student teaching practica, inter-group dialogue experiences, and interdisciplinary team teaching, or who have engaged in building and being a member of learning communities. What these approaches share is the provision of opportunities to modify assumptions about diverse “others.” Students in the language program design course enter at various points in their progress through our Master’s program. For some near the beginning of their studies, the principle concepts and theories often seem like little more than “technical” vocabulary and are not fully appropriated until action has transformed their initial understandings of the terms. For other students who have been socialized through several of our Master’s courses, the principles are more conceptually clear; yet they still need practice in implementation. Putting their interpretations into an action plan and dialoguing with peers about that plan are two steps that foster the critical reflection and creativity necessary to moving emergent concepts toward an initial design. Freire (1998) wrote, reflection is invaluable... as men and women simultaneously reflecting on themselves and the world, increase the scope of their perceptions by beginning to direct their observations toward previously inconspicuous phenomena. (p. 63). Regardless of when the

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Masters' students enter the degree program, they are encouraged to make use of these principles in all their course work.

In the course under discussion here, the students move conceptually back and forth between abstract ideas and concrete expression through classroom discussions of course readings and the continuing formulation of their own innovative language programs. Out of the diverse opinions that emerge from classroom discussions, they struggle to bear these principles in mind even as they design and redesign their language programs. At a certain point in these discussions, they need to create a theme that represents how their language and literacy objectives will be used in instructional activities. Later, when they have implemented their language curriculum, they evaluate the viability of their theme, but they also assume the responsibility for evaluating the impact of their programs on learners, the wider community, and even themselves. Throughout their experience planning their programs, their reflections and subsequent conceptual shifts become valuable lessons for them as language program directors, curriculum planners and educators.

Learning in this course is defined as shifts in language use and conceptualization. Thus, as the program developers define their directions, their plans are given critical feedback from other peers. It also represents a parallel path to addressing the projected shifts in language use and identity of their future students. In the context of world language pedagogy, this means challenging the "given" images in textbooks to help learners become critically literate and intellectually appreciative of their own positions vis-à-vis other cultures. This orientation also shifts the program developers' visions from the frame of individual learning in classrooms to collective learning from the resources of a diverse community, resources that not only teach but need to be respected, critiqued, and augmented by the learner him/herself. In other words, language learning becomes a process of developing membership in an "other" community. This orientation also extends a Neo-Vygotskian position<sup>1</sup> on an individual's co-construction of learning with more expert others (Wells, 1999a, 1999b) to the consideration of the type of communities we hope to build from diversity.

The students' language programs are built to respond to what are perceived as inadequacies in society. Using a Vygotskian definition of learning as a conceptual shift reflected in changing language practices, I direct the classroom's perspective on diversity from a humanistic relativist position (all diversity is universally valued) to one more aligned with post-colonial expectations. Post-colonial orientations identify and then analyze who or what is perceived as occupying the normative center and who or what is being marginalized. Further theoretical insights are drawn from critical theory that looks at critical cross-cultural encounters with difference ("the other") and asks who benefits from difference<sup>2</sup>. This line of thinking pursues the question of how benefits are produced and why. Incorporating these shifts in thinking in our teacher education program offers possibilities of building instructional language practices that incorporate recognition of diversity both locally and internationally. Through efforts to build diversity into our program development process and to reflect upon its consequences, our future language curricula developers will hopefully integrate different voices into their own ways of operating in the world that result from their experi-

ence of grappling with considerations of difference in both their language curricula deliberations and their implementations of those curricula. Clearly, teacher education programs embrace certain forms of dialogic learning, such as inquiry-based learning, community-service learning, and project-based learning (1997). However, these do not necessarily require challenges to neglect of diverse views nor to the value of drawing on diversity as a resource<sup>3</sup>. Whenever teachers experience and develop skill in working together as a diverse group, it is our expectation that they will be able to bring this valuable social capital with them into their other classrooms and schools.

The examples below were selected to show these conceptual shifts in diversity understanding. They draw on our course discussions and on students' posted reflections in WebCT, courseware that, in addition to logistics and announcements, allows for shared reflections on course texts and classroom observations. The student posts on Web-CT are not graded but do count towards their final grade as participation in class discussion. The posts serve to make public the in-process thinking about the texts we read and allow for further in-class discussion reflecting concerns, questions, and doubts. An important characteristic of these discussions is that all concerns, regardless of what principles they challenge or whose concerns they represent, have a realistic chance of being voiced, critiqued and implemented.

During the 13-week semester, these future language program directors are charged with designing an entire program — including publicity, recruitment, selection and enrollment of students, curriculum design, supervision of other teachers, assessment of student learning, and program evaluation. From the very beginning, they must imagine the students who will be recruited into their programs. It is in this imagination that “diversity” is anticipated. Often the diversity is an expression of what they are already familiar with, a response guided by their experiences in learning or teaching language. In the Master's program, the issue of learning how to use the students' diversity as a resource in the classroom is one theme typical of the face-to-face meetings with our course instructors. In turn, this helps in exploring diversity in their own language curriculum. This fact frequently comes out through our weekly process of student presentations and discussions about our principles, goals, and objectives, whose theoretical foundations are negotiated and supplemented by our assigned readings. Students draw on weekly assigned readings and written responses to discuss their planning with their instructor and their peers. They conduct observations of other world language classrooms in the area to see the degree to which diverse students actively participate in classroom activities. These observations provide an additional opportunity to question the normative content of our professional practice. Such questioning requires a disciplined effort to identify the concrete value-implications of a particular instructional practice. In analyzing lessons and discussing student engagement in learning, they become keen to better design the instruction to be used in their own evolving world language curriculum. Later, at the end of the course, these future program directors display and present a poster of their courses to a wider audience at a forum open to the public, and in their final reflections, they respond to the feedback received from that presentation. This is the cycle of discursive and physical activities that precede the implementation of their language course curricula.

Below are representations of oral discussions and written commentary that form the language data set collected during one semester (Spring 2006) for tracing the generation of ideas that students weave into their projects and for providing explanations of their theorizing. Notice how the selections incorporate “events” in which student questions initiated new directions of inquiry, examples of how the collaboration draws on learned principles that become reinterpreted into themes that help guide their process of curricular development. These three vignettes are admittedly critical moments selected from among the interactions of five selected students who took on the role of language program directors to develop new curricula. They are also illustrative of general tensions that emerge when making programmatic decisions of this nature. In dialectical fashion, the issues produced by these tensions are confronted and then surmounted to produce a more responsive curriculum. In essence, they are a part of “putting into action” the participants’ theory-building.

**Example #1—From the center to the margins**

Mohammed, a French teacher in his late thirties from Morocco speaks about his plans for his program.

*Mohammed:* I have taught French before and often the curriculum is designed to help students see themselves as future tourists in Paris, France. Everywhere in advertisements for French instruction, you can always see the Eiffel Tower and scenes from Paris. I don’t think the textbooks help students see the wider Francophone world.

*Theresa:* So are you saying that you want to challenge the tourist orientation and focus on the Francophone world?

*Mohammed:* I hadn’t thought about it that way. But I would like to focus on the Francophone world and help high school students in the U.S. get a better sense of geography. I interviewed a local French teacher and she welcomed the idea of helping students improve their knowledge about geography. Perhaps I hadn’t questioned their identity as tourist, but I did think of them as future tour guides who could design posters for the various countries. So I guess I was questioning their identity as consumers of stereotypes based only on France. I wanted to give them a chance to represent a Francophone country based on what they find out about the country. I was thinking I could allow them choice and through this choice they would bring in their discoveries about diverse countries and later present through their posters. This would allow the whole class to learn through their own diversity and still allow for creative use of French for learning geography.’

Mohammed had taken to heart the notion that diverse learners would appreciate various means of engaging their talents. It was clear he was drawing on concepts from multiple intelligences (Hall-Haley & Austin, 2003; Annenberg World Language Program) and inquiry-based learning (Wiggins & Tighe, 2003; Tchudi & Laffer, 1997). Mohammed wanted to create an opportunity for students to use French language to learn a content area and incorporate various systems of representation to allow for communication of what the students had discovered. From here, he could introduce

the language that fit their needs to communicate their understanding. Yet one additional step that was as yet as an unrealized possibility for him was critically reading the currently available curricular materials as providing a limited number of identities for learning French. The middle-class orientation of learning French for tourism or travel would be nearly impossible for many cash-strapped families, let alone those who are impoverished and barely surviving. In presenting a system of deferred gratification for learning French, textbooks actually could be read as disincentives for those who cannot imagine themselves in the identities provided by language textbooks. Our discussion moved our thinking to consider the ways in which textbooks and materials actually may perpetuate colonialism through focusing students' attention on Parisian French as the center and not valuing the local varieties of French in use throughout the Francophone world (Canagarajah & Canagarajah, 1999; Tollefson, 2002; Pennycook, 1998). Were there other French users in the Francophone world who could be the focus of French language learning, and thereby shift students' interest to inquiries on variety within a language-speaking community, reflecting Mohammed pondering of where he fit in to the preexisting model of French as white Paris? Mohammed's curriculum could be further expanded to encompass issues of intercultural education, issues of immigration and how communities respond equitably to newcomers (Oster & Starkey, 2000). Later Mohammed took up these ideas and continued developing his language program to offer alternative narratives to that of France as the exclusive center of French cultures.

**Example #2—"Cultural representations are not that easy. How do I get away from creating stereotypes?"**

This was the question that Linda, Arlene, and Bonnie were grappling with. They had decided to collaborate on building a program that would address the segregation that was occurring in their urban school district. They wanted to bring teens together to communicate in Spanish, to learn from each other, and "to have fun." Linda, an Afro-American teacher of Spanish in her mid-thirties, worked in an urban school, and was well aware of studies that examine the educational and social benefits of diversity upon the quality of learning in general (Hurtado et al., 1997; Zuniga et al., 2002). Student-body diversity brings with it richer opportunities for exposure to multiple perspectives and an opportunity to overcome racial and ethnic stereotypes. Nonetheless, while the national population is increasingly more diverse in our nation, re-segregation has also taken place due to suburban flight, charter schools, and increased income disparity (Orfield & Lee, 2005). In Linda's school district, the student population reflected these national trends. She wanted to reach out to attract the students' interests in music through teaching what is often minimized or left out: the contributions of African Diaspora communities in the Americas.

Bonnie, a White woman in her late twenties, who had taught for a few years previously in Hawaii and Central America, thought their efforts could make a difference here by using the 5 Cs as described in the standards to go beyond the individualistic notion of communicative competence and strive for building "communities of practice," a notion that derived from both socio cultural theory and critical feminist theory. Arlene, another White woman in her late twenties just entering into teaching,

agreed to join in with conceptualizing this program because she felt she could also improve her command of Spanish while at the same time collaborating with Linda and Bonnie, a past high school friend. In my discussions with this group, who created an acronym for themselves as the “LAB,”<sup>4</sup> they struggled to come up with a theme that would appeal to teenagers and would incorporate each of their strengths or “funds of knowledge.” Collaborative learning is an important feature of addressing diversity (Annenberg, 2004). However, collaboration is successful when members’ cultural funds are tapped and valued in the creation of some jointly-constructed activity. Here, respecting and allowing for diverse members to shape the procedures and outcomes is a naturally embedded test of not only recognizing the power of collaboration, but enacting it as a struggle with vocal differences in viewpoints. This group’s process illustrated a struggle to collaborate with a greater recognition of conflicting values and points of view. Each member, Linda, Arlene and Bonnie, brainstormed individually about a subject theme. They debated merits of their goals, and proposed language and literacy and content objectives until eventually their different perspectives were reconciled. Their deliberations over which oral and written genres to incorporate as goals had to be negotiated before addressing the participants in our course. Bonnie’s ideas often prevailed because hers were typically the first viable ideas about their programmatic theme during the limited time they spent together during each planning session. Gradually, as the LAB group successively met, the thematic content changed from learning language to constructing a yearbook, to learning social literacies party planning, to learning language through a history of popular music and burning CD’s of party mixes.

When the group presented their initial draft in a public forum, the comment from a professor that most resonated with them was that their theme “Salsa and Chips” could be interpreted as a stereotype of Spanish as a language only good for fiestas and partying. The stinging realization that they could be seen as diminishing, rather than increasing, the cultural value of Spanish usage was a major reason for their decision to reconsider their theme. This new found insight also opened them to serious consideration of Linda’s earlier suggestion that they incorporate music from the African Diaspora into their program for Spanish language study, something that Bonnie and Arlene had not initially accepted. In the end, they decided to make learning this music a major part of their language program, as it not only appealed to teenagers but gave them a different medium for the study of language, literacy, and cultural change. Their final efforts shifted to creating a program for teenagers to learn Spanish language through music and sharing their compilations with others across ethnic and racial groups.

### **Example #3—Working with Diglossic Languages: Choosing between Oral and Reading and Writing Objectives**

The most challenging language program to design was also in the newest language to be offered, Arabic. Fatima, a teacher for the previous five years in a private school, was the pioneer for this course. She had long thought about the diversity of written Arabic and its disconnect from the oral vernaculars of many Arabic groups. Most language programs taught Classical Arabic as if it were a spoken form rather than what

it actually is — primarily a written language. For her new Arabic program, Fatima was wondering “Could critical literacy be introduced when the written mode was so distinct from the oral?” The curricula of less-commonly-taught languages often simplify the complex diversity that characterizes their usage. Thus has frequently been inadequately dealt with in the Arabic teaching profession. When there is diglossia, the written form is wholly distinct from the oral language. Yet all too often in FL academic settings, the written receives more attention. The problem goes beyond the mere register differences that are common to users of Romance, Slavic, and many other languages. For languages in this diglossic group, conventions of use are traditionally prescribed from a long history of separation between oral and written language usage. On the other hand, the emergence of cyber communities has given rise to the use of vernaculars in writing. Songs and other popular media also become sites for this mixing of written and oral. Typically, the slice of the world that is provided in Arabic-as-a-world-language classrooms is often the most traditional, accepting diglossic separation and favoring the written over the oral, despite the obvious defiance by the users in the real world (Al-Nowaihi, 1999; Al Batal, 1993; Palfreyman & al Khalil, 2003; Simawe, 1997.).

Fatima anguished over how to support students as they begin to face the actual complexities of the Arabic-speaking world. Her main idea was to bring learners into various social routines involved in family life. In this way, her social goal of creating a family constituted by her students could then re-enact identities that would afford opportunities for looking at relationships that become normalized through spoken Arabic and that lent themselves to shaping one’s language use. She initially planned on sharing meals as her theme, inviting guests whom her students would prepare to receive, and concocting a banquet with these invited guests as the culminating activity. She was still concerned about how to introduce the written forms that corresponded to the language they were learning orally. She planned on using English to explain the difference between the oral and written language, but how? Since I was not aware of how the diglossic situation was culturally expressed in various social interactions in Arabic countries, I asked her to brainstorm the media and genres that made use of oral language conventions. Popular music, comics, e-mails, websites, theater, and short stories all came to mind. Furthermore, this led to the realization that within the Arabic-speaking world, Saudi versions of oral communication have become the most widely-understood variety due to their dominance in producing mass media. She began planning to create lessons of the written transliterations of oral Arabic that would lead to student understanding of written conventions, but also to use oral Arabic in authentic genres to demonstrate her organizing theme of familial language practices. Fatima could also incorporate her idea to challenge students to look at the Arabic representations in the media in the U.S., and to question the images being created by the few corporations that control the production of news in the U.S. She decided that this approach could accomplish various goals of language learning at three levels: socially intimate (family), mass media, and in the public sphere. She also felt that this pragmatic knowledge, appropriately applied, should work for language in both the U.S. and Arabic-speaking worlds. She set out to build these into a viable working plan for ten days.

## **Discussion about the Classroom Examples**

In each of the above three examples, our Master's students gradually took up identities as language program directors — informing their program decisions with interpretations that sprang from our discussions of principles from their readings and past learning. They responded to critical feedback from their instructor and their peers and then returned to redesign their programs based on the experience. We have no expectation that these initial steps will always result in the implementation of flawless language programs, for there is ample evidence that the building of teacher skill and confidence to work successfully with diversity and difference must be first grounded intellectually and supportive of experientially rich learning. As their instructor, I gradually took on the consultant role, learning while at times prodding and pulling out decision-making knowing that those decisions might need to be revisited later on. In creating our programs together, we had to decide how to take into consideration such issues as our own prior experiences, those notions that had been pre-sanctioned by the research, and material from past courses on language and learning. At the same time, we had limited information about who would be our future “diverse” students. From these often contradictory sources of information, a principle-based language and content curriculum emerged that would address the state standards, meet the students’ own objectives, and meaningfully engage diverse learners during the 10-day summer course of language and content study.

In these vignettes, I have represented a selection of critical moments that reflect the practices that we encourage in future language professionals: namely, (1) drawing on diverse texts (own life experiences as text, others’ lives, and professional ) and resources (professional & state standards, students and their community, and diasporic communities), (2) collaborating with diverse colleagues within diverse power relations (peers, consultants, community leaders, researchers), (3) developing a critical stance towards how normative practices in selecting units of language instruction affect diverse students, (4) developing a reflective stance towards creating programmatic innovations that address inadequacies in currently existent programs, and (5) being professionally responsive to emergent and often unexpected learning by diverse learners that could inform the direction and quality of instruction.

The vignettes I have selected are examples that represent the kind of reoccurring episodes in the course which challenged normative ways of thinking in our profession. All these practices contribute to shaping a professional stance that reflects our understandings of how to use language and language instruction to build new realities for diverse language learners. This stance is most closely linked to a concept known as “engaged learning” in which learners address complex, real-world problems. According to Colby (2003) and Palmer (1998) : typically, learning from this type of instruction takes place in 4 four configurations: 1) academic course work, volunteer experience in local communities and structured reflection, called ‘service learning;’ 2) joint faculty, students and community members participating in research to solve problems within a community; 3) students in learning from peers, as well as faculty in collaborative groups; and 4) project or problem-based learning about complex, real-world issues which becomes the structure for learning.

Now more than ever, this space for critical practice is needed. As nationally prescribed curricula become reified for all students, professionals need to be ever-vigilant in assessing across programs the curricular effects on diverse learners. As the process of multiple perspective building is learned by teachers, they build skill in enacting Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity, which is accounting for one's location and habitus in order to sustain engagement with ideas and social issues as practical problems. Bourdieu encourages researchers to develop a 'multiple perspectives' orientation (Bourdieu, et al., 1999, p. 3). As a teacher educator and language researcher, I see that this multiple perspective orientation is useful not only for researchers, but for anyone working toward a pluralistic vision of education. I am challenged to face the diversity of my students as they develop interpretations of our teacher education programs' goals, the current professional literature, and the growing diversity of their own students. As my students push to deepen their understanding and probe my knowledge with their interpretations and understandings, my learning through this course continually also helps me to challenge the venerable tenets of our field as they are applied locally in classrooms. Our discussions aim to re-assemble our understandings into curricular configurations that will affect local students' learning across a language program.

What are the instructional approaches for world language and content that help prepare teachers and students to "read" a culturally particular world outside their own familiar sphere of experience? In the earlier vignettes, the directors initially designed their programs anticipating diverse students, presented their plans to receive critiques, and then responded by searching for further answers. The cycle of making tentative approximations or "drafts" of their language curricula and seeking and giving critical feedback (about whom the curricula serve, what language and literacy practices indicate this, how the curriculum connects to diverse student lives by extending language learning in a meaningful way outside the classroom, and how their curriculum builds more complex thinking through language and literacy) contributes to socializing the future program directors to seek outside "readings" or interpretations of their curriculum. They help form an awareness and appreciation of how "other" stakeholders respond to their projected curriculum. Over the years that I have taught this course, I have observed that this process affects how the program directors also involve students in making approximations, tentative understandings about the world language and culture being taught during the implementation phase of their programs. The directors, who then become the instructors, engage students in similar inquiry to find patterns across their understandings to check them with "others" and use literacy practices to write to outside sources, to interview "others" to seek verification of their understandings. Often the process leads to more student questions that inevitably require ending the cycle before all questions are answered. Frequently, the directors are approached, particularly in the elementary and middle school programs, by learners' parents who are impressed with their children's newly developing language learning and who want to find ways to continue the program. This response has been consistent across the language programs offered thus far, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili and French. No doubt this approval legit-

imates the directors' identities as professionals. For several, the experience has launched their careers in many ways that I had not anticipated.

How does this educational experience affect diverse students relative to their progress in learning language through our academic institutions? Because the programs last for only ten days, the program directors do not collect data on their students beyond their programs. Funding would be needed to do follow-up research on how this experience may affect diverse learners. What is evident from my review of the programs created thus far is the growth in the directors' attention to monitoring their own cultural assumptions about language and language learning that might affect diverse learners. I do also find evidence of growth in the directors' recognition of the value in understanding and drawing on diversity in target language communities abroad, as well as their global diasporas, to better understand and change their interpersonal and instructional practices.

Moreover, as each new cohort of directors create their own language programs and later act to implement their curriculums, particular answers to these questions on diversity and difference are dynamically shaped. Their work helps them question ready-made curricular materials that have minimum responsiveness to local diverse communities. Undoubtedly for me, this course has opened up an area of research. More importantly though, directors' own professional voices about their progress have been expressed outside of my course. Several have gone on to receive funding to implement their work in local school districts (Abel, 2002-03). Others have presented at regional conferences such as the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language (Ites, 2005; Xie, 2005). The impact of these activities outside the course demonstrates that their learning has reached a level that enables them to participate in innovatively shaping the realities of professional discourse and educational institutions.

## **Conclusion**

In order to foster awareness in future teachers of any educational program's curricular effects, it is important to engage teachers in unpacking the larger language program's own assumptions about normative language and language learning, while also examining how the teacher education programs shape teacher identities in the ESL and FL professions. The course described here challenges cultural perspectives with multiple opportunities for thoughtful reflection and feedback. Teachers build understandings of their theoretical framework by selectively drawing on language and language learning principles. Peers, as well as their instructor, are guided by critical dialogic learning experiences that address complex issues in language instruction, through use of "pedagogies of engagement." In this way, teachers experience co-constructing knowledge with communities of diverse teachers and learners (Palmer, 1998).

Specifically, the teachers are guided to consider: 1) the missing "others" from diverse social language groups that have been largely ignored by normative curricula, 2) "others" that have been socially isolated from groups in the same community, and 3) "others" whose diglossic communication systems have been reduced to reified standards of written language. They are engaged in exchanging and critiquing their positions with their colleagues, and then turning their analyses back on themselves.

Hence this article advocates for curricular attention to diversity not only in the content of the teacher education program (Shultz, 2000), such as including courses that introduce critical multicultural theories, multiple intelligences and critical literacies, but also in the process of preparing teachers in their course work as well. The teacher education program that includes space for teachers to design and implement new programs for their learners also helps to build in healthy skepticism about the very applicability of the teacher education program's tenets. Therein the program facilitates a built-in process for questioning the relevance of the tenets to local schools. In this way, as the teacher education-program participants negotiate and sustain a 'habitus' that is receptive to and relevant to changing local communities, teacher educators are afforded the opportunity to continue to grow with the diversity. As such, their programs also can allow for the possibility to let these differences shape the program to be relevant to new and complex times of learning and instruction.

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## Notes

- 1 For discussion of diglossia see Ferguson (1959). Other languages that belong in this group are Greek, written Mandarin Chinese in Cantonese and other non-Han dialectal regions. For further reading on Vygotskian contributions specific to foreign and second language learning, see Wong, 2005; Lantolf & Negueruela, 2005; Hall-Kelley, 2000; Donato & McCormick, 1994.
- 2 Recent second and foreign language research informed by postcolonial theoretical contributions can be found by referring to Mahir, 2003; Pennycook, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992.
- 3 The term diversity is an inclusive term that includes many social, biological, and ethnic distinctions. I follow Melnick & Zeichner (1998) in focusing on "social class, gender, race, ethnicity, and language differences under the heading of cultural diversity," (p.94).
- 4 Two of the students had read about the Bakhtinian Circle in earlier classes and this seems to have helped them see themselves as "intellectuals" contributing new knowledge as a group, while simultaneously playing with the notion of creating a music laboratory with the students.