



Local Meanings, Global Conversations: Exploring Intercultural Pedagogies for a Pluralist World, Through an Alaska-Kenya Case Study

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Abstract: (excerpts)

The centerpiece of this study is the examination of intercultural communication in classroom language and literacy events mediated by online technology; this study is based on a 4 month collaborative, intercultural, online, classroom, writing project between 20 middle school students in Nairobi, Kenya, and 16 peers in Aleknagik, Alaska. The project happened in 2009 and produced document artifacts (poems, descriptions, images, lesson notes etc.)...Based on a Vygotskian (1978) sociocultural model and a Bakhtinian (1982) multidialogical orientation, I explore how such an analysis can illuminate on communication strategies employed by translingual global peers in global contact zones (Canagarajah, 2013)...

Calling for Scholars to Make the Shift...

- We need to shift “from a view in which language is narrowly tied to a community, a time and a place...and in which language is primarily seen as having local functions, to a view in which language exists in and for mobility across space and time” (Blommaert, 2010; p. 181)
- “we need a more complex and dynamic orientation to context in order to understand the spatiotemporal mobility of English” (Canagarajah, 2013; p. 153)
- What is the role of education in a pluralistic world? (Paris, 2011; Rose, 2012)
- “as the world becomes increasingly interconnected...educators need to find ways to help their students understand the...myriad experiences of variously situated peoples...” (Morrell, 2008; p. 63)

Primary Research Question

In what ways can an analysis of an intercultural, multisite, online, collaborative writing project inform understandings of classroom language and literacy events in translocal contact zones?

(From the Literature)

Translingual practices – Canagarajah (2013)
Global contact zones – Canagarajah (2013)
Sociolinguistics of Globalization – (Blommaert, 2010)
Metrolinguistics – Pennycook (2010)
Poly-lingual languaging – Jorgensen (2008)
Grassroots literacy – Blommaert (2008)
Plurilingualism – Farr, 2010; The Council of Europe, 2000
Multiethnic Youth Spaces (Paris, 2011)
New Ethnicities (Harris, 2006)

Method & Analysis

...through various instrumentation procedures (semiformal interviews and face-to-face elicitation) I will collect reflections by participants and analyze intercultural communication techniques...Using **Nexus Analysis** (Scollon and Scollon, 2004) and **Discourse Analysis** (Fairclough, 2003) I examine document artifacts and interrogate participant post-project reflections...

Some Data...

Dear Bradley Hello, my name is Anirudh Agastyaraju. I know you may be thinking that this is a strange name but maybe it is my uniqueness. I love to play with play station and watch and play soccer. My nickname is Dudu. You can call me Dudu. It is a funny name. I am 12m years old and I am in grade 8. It is because I skipped class in nursery, since the rest of the year 8s are 13. I just read your letter and was wondering what you meant by ‘my yupic is cakukin’. Yours Anirudh.

Waqaa (Hey) Anirudh, Dudu.

I must have been writing too fast last time, I meant my Yup’ik (language) name is Cakucin (Cha-coo-chin), sorry. My day usually starts off my mom waking me up in our igloo, just kidding, we live in normal houses. So how do you get up? I eat hot oatmeal with cereal and then brush my teeth with my Oral-B toothbrush. Then I wait for the bus standing in the very cold Autumn morning. Actually the bus is a fourwheeler carrying an aluminum trailer enough to carry 10-12 kids. It is a cold ride. After school I do my homework while babysitting (It’s very boring) what is it like there?

Sincerely, Bradley

What would you tell him now?

I would say “Hi This is Brad. Who are you?”

Back then I had no idea that Africa had such big cities let alone a city with 4 million people. Before this exchange I had seen pictures from a friend of a family friend when he had travelled to Africa many years ago and all I saw was animals like zebras, a lion and some buffaloes.

Conclusions (implications and findings)

...this on-going study has already started offering valuable evidence for the need to incorporate multicultural education in mainstream curriculum.

(partial) Reference List

(ask presenter for a more comprehensive list)

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Translingual + Translocal + Telecollaborative



NAIROBI: Kenya
20 co-ed grade 9 students
Multiracial, multiethnic day school in the city.
(English, Swahili, Sheng etc.)

ALEKNAGIK: Alaska
16 co-ed grade 9 students
in a village day school.
(English, Yupik)



Literacy Studies:

(a simplified continuum)

(Goody, 1977; Goody and Watt, 1963; Hildyard and Olson, in Street, 1984; Olson, 1977)

“the faculty of language stands at the center of our conception of mankind, speech makes us human and literacy makes us civilized” (Olson, 1977; p. 257).

The ideological vs. autonomous debate (Street, 1984)

(Harris, 2006; Heath, 1983; Paris, 2011; Purcel-Gates, 1995; Scribner and Cole, 1981)

(Apkon, 2013; Brandt, 2001; Freedman, 1994; Graff, 1991; Hull, 2010; Scollon and Scollon, 2004; O’Dowd, 2007; Thomas and Brown, 2011; Tobin et al, 2009; Wandera, 2013; Wood, 2000)