FROM CELEBRATING MULTILINGUALISM TO PROMOTING PLURILINGUAL PEDAGOGY. A VIEW FROM CANADIAN HIGHER EDUCATION.

The Linguistic Landscape In Higher Education In English-dominant And EMI Settings: Future Directions

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Introduction

- Thanks for having me!

- Language and literacy practices of multilingual undergraduate students in Vancouver, Canada

- Shift as a researcher: from doing research that celebrated and documented the rich multilingual practices of students, to.....

- ..... how does all of this relate to education and to helping my students succeed academically?

- Addressing a multi-pluri shift in my research and in applied linguistics
Vancouver, Canada

(source: https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSvQCRHkmS27RA4Vb10GSADxi18pYPT1edekO06MAycZ2MTC1C15A)
Vancouver CMA
Percentage of allophones* by 2006 Census Tracts (CTs)

*Allophones: Population with a language other than English or French as mother tongue

* Punjabi and Chinese languages are the most spoken immigrant languages in Vancouver

* In Metro Vancouver, more than one million people speak a family language other than one of the two official languages

(2011 Stats Canada Census)
Mixing languages: nothing new, what’s the big deal?

What about embracing the use of multiple languages and the mixing of languages as something normal that can help learning to take place in higher education?

(source: https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQIUZLBG9wvu_UivBJRgmWGnz9cMUmssiXodUL0LudqcQBvVvCC)
Recent research and a shift in focus

- A three-year study of the academic literacy practices of multilingual first-year undergraduate students funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) – co-investigator Danièle Moore.

- I recorded, documented, and celebrated many examples of rich multilingual practices in and around student participants’ learning, and in the process of producing high stakes monolingual texts in academic English.

- Translanguaging (García, 2009; Canagarajah, 2011; Li & Zhu, 2013) and codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011) in multilingual, multimodal texts in which languages and scripts (Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Farsi), images and emoticons were mixed creatively (for examples, see Lee & Marshall, 2012; Marshall, Hayashi, & Yeung, 2012).

- In and around learning......

- A nagging doubt...What could I do with my privileged position as a researcher to help students succeed when what I was documenting (and benefiting from) was so far from the normative practices students were assessed by?

- In looking for answers to that nagging question, I shifted my analytic lens from the multi to the pluri, and found more than just a new word for the same thing among the ever-growing terminology in our field.
Jessie: chatting on Weico
(from Marshall & Moore, 2013)

First 11 simplified Chinese characters: “If something good happens to you, it might be because something bad happened before.”

4 icons that follow: “unhappy faces” - showed her followers her emotions at the time

Next 6 Chinese characters: “Two bad things make me feel silly or stupid, like my brain becomes, doesn’t work.”

5 face icons: first two (unhappy faces) next three (scarey faces).

Next 10 face icons: no individual meanings for each icon; instead “this whole faces mean I’m happy ’cause it’s time for lunch and that means it’s gonna make me fat [laughs], burgers, French fries, noodles.”

“Without emoticons the sentence would not catch attention.” Jessie’s normal practice on Weico to combine languages, scripts, & emoticons.

Jessie was quite sure that all of her readers could interpret the meaning of her text.
Codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011): - diverse languages that form repertoires as an integrated system” (p. 401), not as discrete codes.

Codemeshing is thus distinct from codeswitching, which focuses on language switches and alternation between different systems. (p. 401)

Equally, codemeshing accommodates “the possibility of mixing communicative modes and diverse symbol systems (other than language)” (p. 403).
I: 说那个, repeating writing 完了之后, 然后把那句子改变就行了, 对不对? “The fact is academic writing is.. so.. for university students, Academic Writing is not always easy”.

[This means that, repeating writing after doing the repetitive writing, only the sentence needs to be changed, right?. “The fact is academic writing is.. so.. for university students, Academic Writing is not always easy”.

I: 第二个是那个。. simple words 吧?
[The 2nd one is, simple words, right?]

Y: Humm, 对。呵, 不是。是simple sentence structure。
[Humm, you are right. Ah, no, you are not right. Actually, that’s a simple sentence structure.]
Plurilingualism and the panoply of lingualisms
The panoply of lingualisms....?

An array of terminology:

- Bilingualism.....
- Multilingualism.....
- Codeswitching.....
- Codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011)
- Translanguaging (García, 2009)
- Polylingualism (Jorgensen, 2008)
- Metrolingualism (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015)
- Plurilingualism
- And more...!

(Image source: https://termcoord.wordpress.com/mouse/)
Familiar, traditional views of multilingualism

Traditional definitions of multilingualism: high degrees of competence in separate languages

- Bloomfield (1933, p. 56): bilingualism involves “native-like control of two languages”
- Weinreich (1953, p. 1): “the practice of alternately using two [or more] languages”
- Haugen (1953, p. 7) the need for “complete meaningful utterances in the other language” (as cited in Romaine, 1989)
- A bilingual speaker is someone who is able to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the sociocultural demands made of an individual’s communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and who is able positively to identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures), or parts of them. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, p. 90)
Moving forward…

- The above understandings form the basis of many institutional discourses around multilingualism in higher education in Canada, according to which many multilingual students seem to be lacking, which encourages deficit/remedial views of “multilingual learners.”

Plurilingualism

1. Where does plurilingualism fit in with the panoply of lingualisms?

2. Three critiques (misconceptions?):
   [i] the view that this European approach is based on an invalid static binary between the social and the individual
   [ii] it is over-agentive
   [iii] it can serve to reinforce social inequities within a neoliberal world order

3. Present data to show plurilingual pedagogy in action and consider questions raised
Plurilingualism

- Plurilingualism, and plurilingual competence (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 1997, 2009; Lüdi & Py, 2009; Moore & Gajo, 2009): a greater focus on teaching and learning

- Brings to the fore understandings of competence in relation to individual biographies and life experiences, the navigation of social trajectories, hybridity, agency in context, and pedagogy (for examples, see Marshall & Moore, 2013; Moore, Marshall, & Zhu, 2014).

- Aim to find and create links to effective classroom pedagogy.
Plurilingualism or multilingualism? What’s the difference?

Plurilingualism describes sociolinguistic phenomena in contact situations, where people use two/three or more languages in interactions, as does multilingualism.

A translation of multilingualism?: “it’s just the word French people use for multilingualism.”

So, educators who describe phenomena with either the pluri or multi stem may be describing the same things.
So, what’s new with the pluri stem...?

- Martin-Jones and Jones (2000) use the term **multilingual** “to capture the multiplicity and complexity of individual and group repertoires” (p. 5). They emphasize a full range of multilingual literacies as social practices, arguing that a focus on the complexity and plurality of literacies “means recognising the diversity of reading and writing practices and the different genres, style and types of texts associated with various activities, domains or social identities” (p. 5). As the same authors note, this range of multilingual literacies “focuses attention on the multiple ways in which people draw on and combine the codes in their communicative repertoire when they speak and write” (p. 7).
The terminological switch has differentiated *multilingualism* (the study of societal contact) from *plurilingualism* (the study of individuals’ repertoires and agency in several languages) (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Gajo, 2014; Moore & Gajo, 2009).
Plurilingualism: “going plurilingual”!

Phenomenon

Lens

Competence

Pedagogy
Looking at teaching and learning spaces through a plurilingual lens

- A plurilingual lens: a person’s languages and cultures are viewed as interrelating in complex ways that change with time and circumstances, and which depend on individuals’ biographies, lived experiences, social trajectories, and life paths (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 1997, 2009).

- Challenges the understandings of languages as "fixed and discrete entities" (Taylor & Snoddon, 2013, p. 440), and in terms of full and balanced competence.

- In employing this plurilingual lens in teaching and learning contexts, teachers challenge discourses of deficit, (in)competence, and open up spaces for a plurality of languages and cultures in their classes.
Plurilingual and pluricultural competence

- Interconnectedness of linguistic and cultural repertoires
- Agency of individuals as learners
- Situatedness within a language ecology
- Sensitivity to changeable conditions and dynamic aspects over time along life paths and social trajectories; constraints and opportunities in educational contexts (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Conteh & Meier, 2014; oste et al, 2009; Gajo, 2014; Grommes & Hu, 2014; Piccardo & Puozzo Capron, 2015)

- A language competence can never be “reached” in a full or complete sense; instead, it continues to develop throughout life (Lüdi & Py, 2009, p. 157) Focus on language awareness, and on teaching and learning that recognizes “the affirmation of plurilingualism as a potential resource rather than necessarily a barrier to language and content learning" (Lin, 2013, p. 522; see also Bono & Stratilaki, 2009; Gajo & Steffen, 2015; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2003).
1. A static binary between the social and the individual?

- The origin of this view can be traced to the works of Beacco and Byram (2007) and Moore and Gajo (2009): A terminological switch from multilingualism (the study of societal contact) to plurilingualism (the study of individuals’ repertoires and agency in several languages) (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Moore & Gajo, 2009).

- Plurilingualism focuses on the inter-relation and interconnectedness of languages "particularly, but not exclusively, at the level of the individual" (Piccardo, 2013, p. 601).

- Plurilingualism and plurilingual competence are about practice: everyday interactions, creativity, exercising agency, in ways that promote intercultural understandings and competence.

- Individuals making choices and interacting in specific contexts and situations, including those where their agency is constrained.
2. An over-agentive view of individuals' language practices?

- Does the focus on the individual as the locus of interaction accord too much emphasis on agency and not enough on structure and constraint?

- **Agency in context**: plurilingual agency is always seen in terms of context.

- Plurilingual and pluricultural competence: “the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw” (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 1997, 2009, p. 11).

- The plurilingual speaker is thus a socially situated actor (Gumperz, 1982; Coste & Simon, 2009).
3. Can plurilingualism serve to reinforce inequities in a neoliberal world order?

- Neoliberalism in applied linguistics (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2013): a shift from pedagogical to market values in applied linguistics, involving the abandonment of the social and cooperative ethic for individualist and competitive business models.

- Flores (2013): plurilingual shift facilitating the creation of an ideal neoliberal subject, serving neo-liberal capitalist agendas of employers and transnational corporations. Educators should take care and engage critically to avoid being complicit in promoting a covert neo-liberal agenda.

- Kubota (2014):
  "the conceptual features of the multi/plural turn overlap with neoliberalism and neoliberal multiculturalism, which uncritically support diversity, plurality, flexibility, individualism, and cosmopolitanism, while perpetuating color-blindness and racism (p. 1)"
Plurilingual teaching and learning initiatives are aimed at raising awareness of, and promoting the use of, minority languages and national languages in response to the hegemonic spread of English (see for example Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Conteh & Meier, 2014; Hufeisen & Neuner, 2004).
Workplace plurilingualism in Switzerland

- Switzerland: workplace plurilingualism has been studied in detail in transnational corporations (see for example Berthoud, Grin & Lüdi, 2012)
- 4 official languages, a highly territorial model of language planning: is a better alternative to encourage workers to abandon workplace interactions involving up to four national languages, often truncated, and instead buy into English as a lingua franca, which is the new emerging sociolinguistic reality in Switzerland and in other multilingual European countries?
Agency and the neoliberal critique

- We help students succeed, raise awareness of all languages, share ideas about equity and their position in society and the academy/workplace. That is our agency.

- Is it their decision what to do with the knowledge they learn in our classes?

- The critique of plurilingualism could be made about almost any knowledge production in workplaces and higher education.
The study @West Coast University (WCU)

The study

- A three-year qualitative-ethnographic-longitudinal study into the language and literacy practices of multilingual university students in Vancouver - funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

The participants

Undergraduate university students:

- ... taking a first-year academic literacy course (AL98) (800+ per year)
- 90% of students on the courses use a language other than English at home

The data

- Semi-structured interviews with students (37 AL98;19 LAF98)
- Observation and ethnographic fieldnotes
- Recordings of in-class interactions
- Analysis of students’ written texts
Accessing multilingual spaces...
(source: Marshall & Moore, 2013)
Ah Yeon: bringing Korean to the class

- Came to Canada when 13
- Self identifies as Korean, and as a Canadian citizen
- “Kind of weird for me to say Canadian because my English is not fluent”
- All her friends are Korean speakers
- Says she speaks better Korean than English but not good enough to be accepted any more as a native Korean speaker
- Failed grade 12 English: grade in 40s, 90%s in other subjects
him, explaining that he is making a *hasty generalization* and that he is mistaken. Use an appropriate writing style.

2. **Email or text message**
   You are listening to a radio talk show debate on whether or not marijuana should be legalized. The talk show host asks listeners to send a text message or email with their views on the issue. Write a message on the subject and make reference in some way to the *slippery slope fallacy*. Follow the normal style you would use for this genre of writing.

3. **Free writing**
   Should countries that have abolished the death penalty reintroduce it if the majority of the population supports its reinstatement? Answer the question with reference to the *ad populum fallacy*. Write in a more formal academic style.

4. **A two-minute speech**
   President George W. Bush famously addressed the United Nations General Assembly after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and stated, “You’re either with us or against us in the fight against terror.” Write a short script for a two-minute speech to your tutorial group on the issue. Make sure to refer to the *false dichotomy fallacy*. Write the script in a style that is appropriate for speaking academically.
Send a text message to the DJ...

TEXT MESSAGE

Hey radio station guy! I was listening while you were talking about weed being a gate-way drug ——.
Personally I don't agree with your thoughts 😑. I don't believe weed is a gate-way drug because just cuz someone smokes a J doesn't mean they'll throw a med in on their own 😛.

매약중독한 사람들은 이것에 대해서도 약물중독이기 때문이

OMG! 😊😊

# Legalize Weed
A: It say um like “people who did drugs eventually will do drugs even though the law forbids them to do drugs so it it’ll going to be end up same consequence” is what I wrote in Korean.

I: So why did you write it in Korean?

A: The people who I worked with they say I should write that in Korean.

[...]

I: So how did you feel when they asked you to write in Korean something that was going to be shown to all your classmates? What was your first reaction?

A: Uh. I thought they were joking because it’s English class and I should not supposed to write Korean in like, like such a present.. presentation and stuff, but like after reading the presentation, like, I kind of get why they were asked to write in Korean … Because it’s about text messaging and like mostly I write Korean when I text message so it’s more like free writing.

I: What was interesting was that after you did that everyone else started doing the same thing.

A: Yeah [...] I think because [...] said, um, you kind of, uhm, put up good comment about what I did, so they thought doing, uhm, putting another language would be good for them to do.
Why a multilingual text? Troy and Jake

I: So how did it come about that she decided to write this?
T: Well we sort of, *we kind of asked her* to because we’ve, I’ve seen her, I don’t know if she was texting in class, *but I’ve seen her like it was this language*, it would be cool to put that in our radio ad thing so.
J: I think she was a little hesitant too to do it, *we were serious like, yeah do it, cool*.
I: So why did you ask her to do it?
J: *Because that’s the way she texts.*
T: Yeah it’s like different ways people text so we thought we’d put that in this piece.
A plurilingual text

• The text shows the features of many of the lingualisms and forms of language mixing described earlier.

• Through the lenses of plurilingualism and plurilingual pedagogy, there are many features of interest.

• Is the text a representation of individuals' biographies, experience, social trajectories and life paths (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 1997, 2009)?

• These factors are not so evident in the text itself, but they did come to the fore in the story that Ah Yeon shared in her interview about the text.

• They became part of her reflection of her story around the text and in this way we retrospectively see their representation.
Ah Yeon also presented a self-description of deficit and lacking in terms of linguistic competence in English and Korean, which matches traditional views of bilingualism and full competence.

Ah Yeon also bought into the discourse that other languages should not be used in her English class (for Ah Yeon and many other students, academic literacy meant English).

Nonetheless, she exercised her plurilingual competence and agency, putting it on show for her peers.
Ah Yeon’s plurilingualism in higher education

- Ah Yeon overcame the constraint she perceived.
- Her English-speaking peers suggested it would be cool to do so.
- Another important factor: instructor was tolerant of other languages being used in class to engage with course content.
- As a result, Ah Yeon's agency in context, matched with that of two peers and her instructor, led to her use of Korean in the text.
- Ah Yeon received a positive response to her plurilingual practice, which had a ripple effect as other groups added Mandarin, Arabic, and Farsi to their texts.
- We can see above the heuristic, dynamic nature of plurilingual pedagogy, creating links to language and culture, adapting according to situations and interlocutors, including monolingual speakers such as Troy.
- And what about content knowledge?
Plurilingualism: phenomenon, lens, competence, and pedagogy?

- Plurilingualism is the same and different from multilingualism – it depends on the lens you are using.

  Plurilingual interaction is linked to competence and to learning.

- Our challenge as educators in higher education?

- Use our agency as teachers to open spaces for plurilingual, pluricultural, critical, reflexive classrooms.
Next steps: shifting to plurilingual pedagogy across the disciplines

- Shift from researching plurilingual pedagogies in language and academic literacy classes to teaching and learning contexts across the disciplines in higher education

- New project (co-investigator, Danièle Moore): *Plurilingualism as an asset for learning across the disciplines in Canadian higher education?*
Issues to address?

1. How are instructors in Business, Biology, Sociology, Education, etc. dealing with linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms?

2. Do they encourage or discourage plurilingual practices and the use of languages other than English and French: why/why not?

3. What do students think? Do they reproduce, problematize, challenge social and institutional discourses around languages and learning?
Data collection methods

- Team ethnography..... One-year funded bridging study
- 2 researchers and 4 plurilingual graduate Research Assistants
- Select 4 classes across the disciplines: add some variety
- Classroom observation (participant and non-participant)
- Audio record interactions
- Ethnographic field notes
- Interviews with instructors and students
- Analysis of students’ writing and instructors’ teaching materials
- Mentor, co-present, and co-publish with RAs
- Collaborative co-construction of syllabus to work with a plurilingual pedagogies focus
- Follow-up later
- Get funded next time around…
That’s all for today.

Any questions?
References


