Theory to Practice

The Necessity of Teaching Intercultural Communication Competence in Literacy Classes

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ABSTRACT

This article explores ways in which intercultural communication competence can be considered a collective competence that is developed through glocal interactions. A theoretical construct, glocalization includes adding to the familiar without disrupting the known to improve both local and global understanding. Specifically, this article uses a case study approach to examine student development in one service-learning project involving graduate students in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University and foreign students enrolled in an intensive English Language Services language learning program. Such glocal learning approaches include recognizing differences and similarities between people of different cultures. The authors argue that postsecondary teachers should teach intercultural communication competence through seeking diverse transactional opportunities, perhaps through service-learning models, because doing so enables students to recognize complexities in evolving global literacy practices.

In our state, we say "everything is bigger in Texas," "don't mess with Texas," and that we are "a country unto ourselves;" and yet, globalization and the increasing ubiquity of immediate communication through technological affordances have made Texas a much smaller place. Clearly, the global is increasingly closer to the local. Rather than prioritizing and emphasizing land mass, influence in a global economy today depends more on strategic communication and smart fair trade. Influence also includes understanding how best to communicate through some sense of intercultural communication competence. Thus, in literacy instruction today, teachers should teach students that we are *not* by ourselves, that people *should* "mess" with us—and *vice versa*— to generate productive disruption and communication, and that ultimately we are *not* that big at all, neither in Texas nor in any other political or social or economic system.

If students do not possess a developed understanding of cultural awareness and

intercultural communication competence, instead of assuming students are simply remedial due to a lack of language and cultural awareness, teachers must seek opportunities to teach *glocal thinking*, which connects the local and the global. Our students can all play important roles in world civil society if they are taught intercultural communication competence. The first step is in adopting strategies to recognize and negotiate differences and similarities between groups and organizations (Bhaduri, 2008; Robertson, 1994; Swyngedouw, 2004).

In this essay, the importance of intercultural communication competence is highlighted by citing key theorists such as Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) and Appadurai (1996) who demonstrate the complexity and need for cultural awareness. Such theoretical understanding was put to practice in a service-learning exchange between a language learning center and a graduate-level course in technical communication and rhetoric. The service-learning exchange focused on difference and similarity. Specifically, university students who taught first-year composition at the school investigated ways in which their curriculum and delivery was similar to and different from instructors' curriculum and delivery at the intensive language center. Similarly, students at ELS were asked to reflect on similarities and differences between instruction and resource support at ELS and instruction and resource support at the university. The goal was to inform university students about ways they could create a more inclusive multicultural curriculum and approach to their teaching while confirming to university-bound foreign students in a scaffolded and safe environment that ELS preparation is strong and may be similar but the cultural environment and expectations of a university may be different. Students' own voices helped identify the types of growth and understanding more diverse transactional opportunities afford, suggesting that such exchanges should be required learning outcomes in courses focusing on literacy.

Discovering Multicultural Differences and Similarities through Transactional Exchanges

Students must learn how to make sense of the vibrant rhythms of culturally diverse and socially complex perspectives. Resources in a global society must be shared in order to be valuable, and modeling sharing resources and ideas in literacy instruction is valuable in teaching intercultural communication competence. As intercultural communication researchers Chen and Starosta (2008) have argued "the citizens of the twenty-first century must learn to see through the eyes, hearts, and minds of people from cultures other than their own" (p. 215). "In order to live meaningfully and productively in this world," they further suggest, "individuals must develop their intercultural communication competence" (p. 215). Just as students who study abroad discover their own beliefs only after seeing them through others' eyes, all students should recognize culture is ever-changing in our global interactive age. Thus, intercultural competence should be a primary skill of all citizens. And, as today's students live in a world that values local and global knowledge mashing—bringing a multitude of perspectives from a variety of cultural viewpoints together—teachers and curricula should embrace the interconnectedness of people and cultures across the world to improve collective decision-making (Herrera, 2012).

The concept of *glocalization*, which combines the terms "local" and "globalization," has been defined as globally dispensed products or ideas designed to accommodate users in local markets (Tharpe, 2001). However, glocal thinking, beyond just selling products, can work to maximize productive dialectical and transactional exchange between people, and in turn can support the development of intercultural communication competence in the classroom. Proficiency in language and regional knowledge, of course, is an important goal in understanding another culture; however, when such proficiencies are not possible, maximizing

reflection over interactive experiences with people of different cultural ethnicities and backgrounds also aids understanding difference and similarity. Increasing meaningful transactional exchange includes making sense of knowledge about other cultures and behaviors, considering feelings and perspectives from people with different and similar backgrounds, and developing an understanding of one's own cultural identity.

At the foundation of *transactional rhetoric* is the belief that meaning-making is a social construct formed through interaction and discussion within a specific rhetorical situation (Berlin, 1987; Berthoff, 1981; Newbold, 1999; Rosenblatt, 1983). For instance, in any given situation there is always a reader/listener, a writer/speaker, and a text/speech. The writer or speaker shares a version or interpretation of some event or idea that is affected by his/her cultural or other lived experiences. The subjective positioning of the reader or listener brings a necessarily different understanding of the text or speech. Difference and similarities in interpretation can lead to disjuncture or spaces of understanding whereby the actors involved in the exchange agree or disagree to some extent or another. A writer or speaker who knows more about the cultural or language background of a reader or listener, or who can interpret difference and similarity more clearly in ongoing, transactional exchanges, can better refine communication practices in order to be more effective (see Berlin, 1987).

Tools like Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov's (2010) *cultural value dimensions*, e.g., collectivism and individualism, masculine and feminine, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, indulgent vs. self-restraint, and structural characteristics, are useful in making sense of such differences between reader-writer-text or listener-speaker-speech. When explicitly taught, these dimensions help students recognize cultural differences and similarities, such as how studying in a university environment may be different than an intensive language institute. Students' own cultural background and experience levels enable them to make connections to these dimensional scales. Experience creates change, and we see ourselves allying with different dimensional states constantly. Hofstede, Hofestede, and Minkov (2010) call the placing of these cultural dimensions a type of cultural programming or "software of the mind," pointing out that we change how we think, feel, and behave toward others as differences and similarities are explored in more complex ways. In this way, our "software" or understanding is being updated all the time. Characteristics within one's own personal culture are in constant flux, a sort of growing neighborhood of understanding and recognition. Moreover, Appadurai (1996) describes this flux as ever-changing fluidity, and that imagined neighborhoods are created based on interaction in both physical and virtual spaces (pp. 8-9). Accordingly, Appadurai's dimensions are flexible pattern-making trajectories—including ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes—and are based on similarities, affinities, and differences with others. What is challenging is understanding that these so-called neighborhoods are highly complex and fluid: every single person in these overlapping neighborhoods of like- and differently-minded viewpoints is influenced by local and global interests and understandings.

Thus, recognizing difference and similarity is the first step in improving intercultural competence, while simultaneously acknowledging viewpoints and perspectives are ever-changing. Doing so is critical for the creation of productive workplaces and effective educational systems, and is essential to working as global citizens. Today's graduating college students are increasingly expected to work in transnational teams, for instance, with diverse colleagues and clients that require complex intercultural procedures and policies and approaches. As Brooks and Normore (2010) suggest, experiential glocal learning is critical in education today (p. 52). There are, however, many obstacles preventing faculty from setting up useful classroom models that support this instruction. It is easy to acknowledge that opportunities to communicate and work with other students with diverse backgrounds and

experiences are important, but it is easier said than done. For instance, educational accountability and many assessment measurements are required for areas other than intercultural communication. The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment, for example, is an entrance exam that is required for many incoming undergraduate students attending universities in Texas. The TSI tests reading, writing, and math skills, but not a student's ability to communicate with diverse audiences in varied contexts. Where standardized tests and curricula are concerned, making room for something new often means setting something else aside. Similarly, there is also some reticence to using digital media to bridge distances, both physical and cultural. As a result, diverse, glocal knowledge work is difficult to employ and sustain in a course.

Intercultural distance learning specialists, however, have developed some solutions to this issue. Starke-Meyerring, Duin, and Palvetzian (2007), for instance, suggest that:

> In collaborating with their increasingly diverse colleagues, technical communicators must be able to build shared virtual team spaces, exploring and weaving together a diverse range of local cultural, linguistic, organizational, and professional contexts in ways that allow for developing trusting relationships and for sharing knowledge across multiple boundaries. (p. 142)

Technical communication, itself, is the use of tools and texts of any modality to convey information with as little ambiguity as possible. In order to meet users' needs, one must work to understand the context and cultural constraints and differences of views between people. Shared virtual team learning or diverse workspaces may include participants who work together from multiple locations beyond social and physical borders. More recently, teachers using the "flipped" classroom model have also been working to provide content for a course and allow students to bring in diverse understandings from their own lives, which thus also become the content of the course. Another viable direction being explored is to bring experiential and problem-based learning strategies into the framework of a course, such as service-learning, as a means of working to maximize transactions and socially-constructed knowledge making with members of the community.

Transactional Learning through Service-Learning Pedagogy

Service-learning (SL) is a useful approach to build shared team learning spaces with the goal of identifying and solving questions and problems (Butin, 2010; Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013; Jacoby, 1996; Zlotkowski, 1998). SL is a pedagogical approach linking academic study and civic engagement through organized service that meets community needs. The service is structured and integrated into the academic curriculum and provides opportunities for students to learn through critical reflection. As this article describes, one model, created by Texas Tech University's (TTU) Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program, consists of a community of scholars who integrate SL philosophy, pedagogy, and process into their professional lives in order to embrace an interconnectedness between problem-based learning, content, and community cultures.

In TTU's SL program, for instance, faculty and students in Technical Communication and Rhetoric worked with teachers at the ELS Language Center in Lubbock to give ELS students more transactional experiences with American students in order to help prepare them for college life and study. In return, graduate students from the university received opportunities to see English as a Second Language (ESL) course content and theory in practice. Opportunities to study cultures in all of their mediated, complex richness are often rare for university students. Students at ELS/Lubbock come from many countries around the world, including, but not limited to Saudi Arabia, Angola, China, South Korea,

Taiwan, Brazil, Mexico, and Turkey. ELS offers multiple levels of intensive ESL instruction to students who have moved to the U.S. with the goal of attending a U.S. college or university for undergraduate or graduate studies. These students need both ESL and cultural training.

At ELS, classes focused on speaking, listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading, and writing are delivered using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Brown (2007) defines the CLT approach as "an eclectic blend of the contributions of previous methods into the best of what a teacher can provide in authentic uses of the second language in the classroom" (p. 18). Foreign students entering U.S. postsecondary institutions often face immense cross-cultural complexities, such as academic conventions surrounding plagiarism or expectations for American classroom behavior and participation. Many institutions seek language and culture expertise from organizations like ELS to support student transition, enriching the CLT experience while increasing the intercultural competence of both domestic and foreign students. Using CLT allows students to practice conversation and listening comprehension, develop writing skills through various genres, engage in reading for multiple purposes, and explore cultural, public speaking, and current events while learning the English language.

In this particular SL partnership, TTU graduate students applied theories of intercultural communication to learn more about what motivates international students, and ELS students increased their own understanding of student-to-student and student-to-teacher communication protocols on university campuses. As international student populations increase (Open Doors 2011: Institute of International Education, 2011), new models of support and instruction such as this SL approach must be developed. Such models might include asynchronous support tools, like discussion boards and blogs, to follow-up synchronous tools, like text chat and voice conferencing. More information about the graduate course, Intercultural Communication, is useful here. The description of this course hints at the complex nature of intercultural experience, for instance, and how an immersive SL transactional exchange can give insight and application for theoretical concepts:

> Intercultural communication is a form of global communication describing a wide range of communication problems in workplaces involving different religious, ethnic, educational, and social backgrounds. The course examines how people from different countries and cultures communicate and perceive the world. As cultures around the world are increasingly impacted by globalization, it is important that technical and professional communicators understand complexities of cultural communication. As such, this course provides an overview of how differing worldviews, values, attitudes, and behaviors can influence our work. (Rice, 2012)

SL works well for specific types of courses and for specific types of transactional exchanges. In this course, textbooks in intercultural communication, global studies, English as a second language, and cultural and organizational theories were used. Current journal and newspaper articles regarding issues related to intercultural communication were examined. Online videos and documentaries relevant to the course were discussed. Further, in addition to working with ELS students at their physical branch, visiting professors from Nanjing Forestry University in China regularly attended and participated in the course, and students and professors from universities in India interacted virtually through responding to students' reflective thinking in blog posts. These opportunities added to our practice of working to understand difference and similarity.

Learning outcomes focused on audience awareness, critical thinking, diversity and multiculturalism, writing style, and communication skills. Specifically, the course was framed with this understanding:

> The objective of the humanities in general is to expand knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in

> relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines and subjects such as intercultural communication, students engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of society. (Rice, 2012)

In addition to class participation and active reflective writing in blogs, assignments included leading an on-campus session with all ELS students in order to build cultural awareness and understanding. Sessions included library tours and library scavenger hunts, campus walks discovering and discussing the meaning behind the art on campus, and regular classroom teaching with ELS students participating. The TTU graduate students were required to interview and produce a multimedia rhetorical reflection over the interview. They were also required to observe ELS classes on location at the center, lead a few writing instruction lectures at ELS, create an internationalization assessment report of their work with ELS students, compose an extended paper worthy of publication, and make reflective connections between all experiences and readings and discussion in the course through the construction of an electronic portfolio.

The work of the technical communication course at TTU was also integrated into the ELS curriculum. During the SL project, and as part of the regularly scheduled ELS curriculum, ELS students' "Contact America!" activities focused heavily on interactions with TTU graduate students in the technical communication class. Contact America! is a regular component of each ELS student's Structure and Speaking Practice class, and requires students to reach out to the local community to administer surveys and questionnaires, listen to invited presentations, and participate in community events. Students complete this work while practicing target English language structures and forms. For each visit to campus, each interview was conducted by graduate students, and each lecture was held during ELS class hours, giving opportunity to connect global interpretations within local contexts. Students were asked to write reflections and testimonials, and to lead class discussions on their experiences. This type of reflection helps students more fully integrate what they learned from their American counterparts into their understanding of American college communication and classroom culture.

The result of these SL transactions indicated learning from all partners, significant positive change in curriculum design that includes more opportunity for students to increase intercultural competence, ongoing development for creating cross-cultural sensitivity through multiple cultural dimensions, and improved directions for continued academic projects involving the instructor of the course and the ELS center. In short, working cross-culturally across these two institutions aided in the participants' process of integrating the global with the local, creating a more glocal understanding between domestic and international students' cultures.

Cultural Understanding through Student Dialectical Exchanges

Reflections from TTU and ELS students in this SL project are telling: they highlight many benefits to understanding intercultural communication competence development through glocal thinking and transactional exchanges. There is great value in seeing through the eyes, hearts, and minds of students. The following are excerpts of their words, used with permission, taken from final critical reflections about the SL exchange. Specifically, TTU graduate students learned that working with people with diverse language background requires a much more rigorous set of teaching techniques than is often employed. Student comments revealed an increased awareness of the complexity in conversations about course content due to unique cultural backgrounds, how an awareness of difference or diversity is not the same thing as understanding and making use of intercultural communication competence,

and that putting course theoretical content into practice is conducive to fruitful transactional conversations and imperative for understanding how theory can be put into practice.

University student perspectives

The university graduate students in this class were all first-year composition instructors as well. University instructors' understanding of foreign students' language experience is often very limited, and an awareness of the unique needs that ESL students may have when mainstreamed into postsecondary writing courses can be improved by analyzing language use for differences and similarities. One student, Lara, wrote this:

> *As a business communication instructor and a consultant in the [communication center at TTU], I interact with international students fairly regularly. Sadly, though, my previous philosophy was not always understanding of international/English as a Second Language experiences prior to enrolling at Texas Tech; instead, I believed that these junior- and senior-level students required a rigorous teaching approach in order to better communicate in the language in which they were learning and participating. I assumed that having already taken English pre-requisites, these students did not need much help; in other words, I gave them little special consideration from native English-speaking students.*
>
> *This perspective progressively changed as I sat in on different classes at ELS. I saw the struggles that international students face as they learn a second (sometimes third, fourth, or fifth) language so that they may hopefully be able to enroll at a university to obtain a degree. Similarly, I saw how hard ELS teachers have to work to be effective in their instruction, especially when dealing with varying backgrounds and skill levels together in one classroom.*

Stated another way, "L2 writing teachers must be aware of the rhetorical knowledge that their novice writers bring to the composition course," including "formal and content schemata as well as implicit and explicit knowledge about text structure, genres, and their purposes" (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005, p. 20). As Lara's remarks indicate, students who have diverse backgrounds require diverse instructional methods that can take much time or a much more "rigorous teaching approach" during the normal routine of a first-year composition class. Experienced ESL instructors in a multitude of contexts can go on at length about the minute individual differences in cultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds that affect the fundamentals of their classroom (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005). It is because these individuals are so complex, that the importance of glocal learning deserves attention in mainstream curricula.

For another graduate student, Chase, it was important to point out that when people come together from different neighborhoods or with different cultural backgrounds they do not necessarily lose core values from their own identities and experiences. Instead, they bring those values to ways in which they understand new knowledge:

> *Learning about a new culture shouldn't make the learner "replace" his old cultural profile with the new information. Instead, the new information, in an ideal learning exchange, leaves both cultures' native-ness intact, supplemented with the new knowledge. To facilitate intercultural communication that creates that kind of growth, though, requires a certain kind of pedagogy. Two terms we've discussed this semester, in particular, I think work—glocalization and trans-local. Both put the emphasis on the value of localities in the international information exchange. Globalization seems to imply homogenization, while, these terms suggest that cross-cultural interaction needs to "protect" local culture's important place. Being "too" local, like being too homogenous, can be a problem, though.*

Chase focused here on glocalization and the trans-local; that is, terms which seek to bridge, like service-learning itself, two concepts as one, for instance the global and local, and the transnational and local. For Chase, the

awareness of the complexity of varying motivations that actors bring to any communication situation was increased.

Gee (2007) discusses cultural connections in rhetorical situations when he talks about children learning science in school. Children who come to the classroom to run experiments with their teacher take on a virtual identity of a scientist. Those with technical backgrounds are well-adapted to this projected role and thus, are more likely to succeed at running successful experiments. This happens because "they can build a powerful bridge between one of their real-world identities ('people like us learn technical stuff well–it's no big deal') and the virtual identity at stake in the science classroom" (Gee, 2007, p. 57). In the same way, international students, who bring with them their local identities, come to the United States in various states of preparedness to handle the demands of the American academic institution, and based on how they see themselves and their position in the world, they can experience various degrees of success. SL and intercultural communication exchanges serve as a platform for both international and domestic students, where they can form their own bridges between local and global identities.

Similarly, in what follows, Mark discusses implications of understanding differences and similarities and knowing how to use that knowledge productively in communicative situations through careful audience analysis. In doing so, he begins to explore how his audience's cultural experience promotes individual considerations over group homogenization:

> *All too often […] we mistake diversity appreciation for intercultural competence. This is not to diminish the value of diversity; however, as technical communicators we need to understand that true intercultural competence goes beyond appreciation. Effective intercultural communication must engage the boundaries and margins and find the context that forms a discourse between people of various cultures [...]*
>
> *To some degree all communication is intercultural. Intercultural competence is really a further application of audience awareness. I have a newfound understanding of how contextual cues help locate meaning within speech acts. This understanding has drawn from the idea of ethnography throughout the semester.*
>
> *The service-learning component of the course has offered numerous opportunities to practice some ethnographic observations of ELS students as they learn English in preparation for university. […] My own boundaries of understanding have been widened by this course. I have come to a new understanding that culture goes far beyond diversity; that an understanding of how differing worldviews, values, attitudes, and behaviors can influence and enhance my pedagogy, communication, and outlook. The greatest lesson is that I can only truly understand my own cultural experience when I have an understanding of other cultures for context.*

Related, Weissberg (2006) accurately contends that ESL students and their experiences "highlight the important role that individual differences play in the acquisition of an L2 and in the development of L2 writing in particular" (p. 39). Mark also reflected upon the value of SL systemically to connect theory and practice. To understand one's own ideological background and motivation for decisions and belief is often a process, as this student learned, of identifying similarities and differences in other cultures and between other people.

Though primarily concerned with written narratives, Soliday's (1994) assertions draw a striking parallel with Mark's experiences with ELS students. One thing that both the graduate students and the ELS students may not realize is that every time they perform speech acts or write down their stories, they represent differences in culture and ideology. They are not just working with language to communicate ideas, but they are translating their very selves as well: "Stories of self-translation involve representing difference, and the representation of difference is at the core of today's struggles in the humanities over competing versions of multiculturalism" (Soliday, 2007, p. 512). This difference is not just being represented through speech, writing, and intercultural interaction. It is being negotiated through the continual

process of glocalization that both ELS students and graduate students like Mark participated in.

Both parties are searching for each other's boundaries and creating context within which they can share knowledge and ideas. These connections, as they relate to a sort of programmed understanding that can change over time, is something another student, David, concentrated on in his reflection over the project:

> *One of the ways culture can be defined, as Hofstede puts it, is a "collective programming of the minds." Such a metaphor implies that outside social and cultural forces are programming the operating system, that no single individual of a particular culture can escape such a programmatic experience. [...] Hofstede's dimensions challenge traditional conceptions of how one can "know" culture. Interaction and experience, while beneficial in understanding culture, only allow users to watch and observe—and thus to appreciate and hopefully become more adept at fruitful and mutually respectful interactions. A more effective way of knowing culture, I argue, is to engage with and learn the programmatic language of the operating system. [...]*
>
> *One of the benefits of our 5377 Intercultural Communication class was being able to answer questions and demonstrate deeper aspects of what a "career" means in American society. During one of my opportunities to sit down and talk with a group of females from Saudi Arabia, they expressed a concern about how the American model of economics affects careers. In other words, they were worried that a job in America was only seen as transient, passing—that a career in America means "what you are currently doing" rather than a long-term social role/obligation like in Saudi Arabia. [...] The rise of globalization has built bridges between cultures, but too often these bridges are marred by systems of convenience or efficiency. Rather than understanding culture at the superficial level or merely for capital gains, the intercultural bridges of the 21st century should, as Gloria Anzaldua so eloquently put it, "create a new consciousness"—a consciousness that can and will only be achieved if we invest in understanding "the collective programming of the minds," to use Hofstede's metaphor on culture.*

In this reflection, David indicated a deeper understanding of how people from different cultures might think differently about workplaces, careers, and education leading to jobs. He identifies wanting to become "more adept at fruitful and mutually respectful interactions." Without this SL experience, he would not have been able to see Hofstede and Appadurai in action within his own community.

In another student reflection, Amelia demonstrated the idea that knowing audiences are always shifting helps the professional communicator and teacher better prepare more effective user experiences. Amelia writes:

> *Going back to reflect on our library day gave me a chance to think about how prepared I was and what I could have done differently then. […] Setting up the library tour took a few simple emails communicating our needs and finding out what the library could offer. In designing the game I relied (maybe too exclusively) on my own experience learning to locate books using online library catalogues. Watching so many students rush around eagerly, engaging with this new place and its resources in unexpected ways, was not exactly something I could have been completely prepared for. Our preconceived expectations and previous experience may trick us into thinking we're ready, but in a new place, with new people, there will always be an element of the unpredictable, which can be risky. [...]*
>
> *My goal with the essay was to tease out ways Appadurai's cultural -scapes might be useful for thinking about ways the work of technical communicators can create and influence those -scapes in an iterative, constantly shifting system. Within mapping and applying various ethnoscapes, an incredibly sensitive awareness of audience is necessary. Narrowing this essay for inclusion here involved pinpointing more specific sites where mapping ethnoscapes (and their intersections with other -scapes) seems important. I realized that social media could be a perfect microcosm for thinking about this, so I added elements of those thoughts to the essay. […] Thinking more carefully about the way we think about ourselves, our work, our culture as a whole [...] these are ways of expanding our limited awarenesses. Practicing this will make me*

more ready for the constantly shifting, multicultural audiences I will work with as a professional communicator and as a teacher.

These experiences could be in receiving ideas through writing or through more experiential engagement, like Amelia's library scavenger hunt activity. In both, as in the second language classroom, the context in which speech acts are formed and essays are written is constantly in flux. With individuals in the room representing so many world views, context must be negotiated and facilitated by the instructor to aid in productive intercultural communication.

International student perspectives

ELS students traveled to campus once a month throughout the project. After each visit, classroom discussions were held about the value of the visit and the learning that took place. In addition to these visits to campus, TTU graduate students visited ELS once a week to observe classes and, eventually, once acclimated to differences and similarities, gave a lecture on college-level writing. At the conclusion of the five-month SL project, ELS students were interviewed and asked to describe their interactions throughout the program and their stay in the U.S. to date, writ large. In the excerpts below, student responses continue to reveal the importance of identities and learning, as well as perceived gaps in competence and confidence between what one expects an American university class to be like, and what they experience the first time they observe it first-hand. They think about their expectations of university life and how they have changed. They discuss what "home" means in relation to their lives in the United States and how their global identities intertwine with their local personalities.

Nadia, a female student from Saudi Arabia expressed a profound moment she experienced while attending a composition class on campus, writing:

We attended a class at TTU, then learned about how to quote from some famous person, how to make it and paraphrase it, and citation. Also when we did that, we saw the Americans and us have the same mistake. When I saw that, I make myself proud. We attended only a normal class, then we listened to the students, how they talked to the teacher and asked the questions. We ask the same questions. We ask it. They are looking for the same things, like commas, the quotations, how to paraphrase, how to make the argument, take both sides, and that there are resources for these and how to support your idea. I think it's the same as here at ELS.

Before this classroom visit, this student had not realized that Americans ask many of the same questions about composition and the English language that international students do. Her surprise might be due to the belief in academic literacy as power. International students are often reminded at ELS they are being prepared for college, and as they move through the 12 levels of instruction, "college readiness" is seen as the end result of their studies. The distance to that readiness can be visualized by a gap between the skill in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English they currently possess, and the skill that native college speakers possess. When this particular student witnessed similarities between her knowledge of these particular literacy practices and her American colleagues, the conceptual distance of that skill shrunk considerably.

Using the ideological model of literacy described by Street (1993), there was a change in this student's perception of the student's own literacy as the connection between "cultural and power structures in society" is revealed through the "variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts" (pp. 433-444). The context that formed her previous mindset was her attendance in the intensive English program, but what she saw in the university composition classroom influenced and helped form her current perception of her own literacy development.

When asked at English Language Services about how Nadia felt the interaction with

university graduate students went, she referenced a change in the perceived cognitive distance between her and the university, this time discussing her friend's recent experiences at the university. The friend, Samah, was also an ELS student before completing the program and continuing to study at another university. Nadia described her experiences like this:

> *I think ELS is the same as the university. Nothing is different. I told you my friend told me that ELS is more difficult than university, because she told me that they ask her more times if she understands, because she is an international student. When she talks about spelling and if they count spelling mistakes against her, they say they would be lenient, because the native speakers have mistakes in spelling. Because they type everything in computer, they correct their spelling. Also they check for the ideas more than the grammar. If your idea is clear, that's good. They want to see from you how you think and what you think in the university. I also took this from when we enter the TTU class. Because it was an English class they focused on grammar. Also they focused on the ideas. How do you make an argument? How do you support your ideas? The same thing is here at ELS.*

Both Nadia and Samah noted unexpected differences and similarities in the relationship between their perceptions of university coursework and reality. For example, Samah thinks that the university is easier than the intensive English program was. In contrast, Nadia learned that both the intensive English program and university composition class teach English grammar, an unexpected similarity. For instance, similar to Akinnaso's (2001) own experiences becoming literate in a culture apart from his home, the literacy knowledge of ELS students "is given an extended definition to include ways of perceiving, thinking, speaking, evaluating, and interacting that characterize a group of people and set them apart from others" (p. 138). This "otherness" is diminished as ELS students work with members of the academic community at colleges and universities near the language centers.

The above definition of literacy far surpasses what some may consider to be the sole purpose of intensive English programs: the development of academic and cultural literacies. In fact, language teaching and learning have enormous amounts of theory and methodology behind them to support students and teachers. Ferris (2009) contended that "in most cases international students' formal/metalinguistic knowledge surpasses that of late- or early-arriving residential students" (p. 31). If a superior understanding of grammatical structures of the English language is not enough to guarantee international student success, then more effort must be made to understand the sociocultural dimensions of their experiences before and during attendance at university.

For members of the academic community, an understanding of sociocultural dimensions can be an important realization. ELS students who have the same questions about commas that first-year composition students do are perhaps limited more by cross-linguistic interference and educational background than a lack of intelligence or expended effort. As Cooke (2006) wrote, "Knowing more about learners and their 'various worlds and experiences' enhances our understanding of which factors influence their English language learning and what kinds of syllabus and pedagogical approach might be most apt for them" (p. 57). To explore the impact of such experiential learning, during one visit to campus, ELS students paired up with TTU graduate students to give the native speakers a chance to learn about their educational and cultural backgrounds. Below are transcribed excerpts from their reflections after the visit. Consider differences between how these students and the university graduate students reflected, and similarities in how both groups are coming to understand others' perspectives. As before, Nadia offered her perspective:

> *We talked about our culture. What we thought before we came here. What we thought after we came here. We told her before we came here we were*

afraid, because we heard that American people don't like us, because our religion or how we dress. But when we came here we found everyone is friendly. Everyone say hi to us, even though we don't know them.

[…] Also, we leave everything behind us when we come here to only take education. Not only children. Money, house, family, everything to take the education. We work seriously for that. In my country, I could speak two words. You remember me when I came? Now after one year here, I can speak. Some people understand me. That's, I think, good. If I work more, I can do more. If I go to University, I can make something new in this university.

This is a beautiful demonstration of an evolving understanding of the local through a global lens. Nadia first provides a picture of the United States that she created as someone who did not come from an American background. Her identity shifts in the second paragraph, first to frustration, and then toward the future, where she hopes to create something new. This empowerment reflects a process of adjustment to local realities and expectations that are becoming a part of her new identity. Much like children in a science class who were not raised with a technical background, this student may not have seen herself as someone who was able to easily succeed overseas. Unlike students at the heart of the argument that "some poor Urban African American children and teenagers resist learning literacy in school because they see school-based literacy as 'white'" (Gee, 2007, p. 55), the student above and others like her are committed to their identity as a scholar, and "without such identity commitment, no deep learning can occur" (p. 55).

The next student expressed his desire to experience the same academic lectures and casual interactions that American university students do. Khalid, a male student from Saudi Arabia said:

I think we can only do it [prepare for university] here, because sometimes we need native speaker to talk with us. Some of them make friends like us. We have friends, and we go every Tuesday and talk, but sometimes it would help to do the same thing as university students. If there are classes, we can attend with native speakers, the same classes in English, like here in ELS. Make an afternoon for this. One hour we can go to TTU and take classes, after school or in the morning. [...] We should attend college classes and count these classes for ELS students.

You should also do activities out of the school, in the street or something. That would be useful. Like volunteer work. I guess it's a good idea, get people to go and participate in society.

Khalid's desire to collaborate and interact with native English speakers echoes the same desire that these native speakers have to learn about other cultures through glocalization. Roskelly's (2003) convincing argument in favor of group collaboration helps further illustrates the important psychological effect that SL and the process of glocalization can have on participants. When ELS and TTU graduate students met to discuss their ideas, a feeling of ownership seemed to dawn on them. As they negotiated cultural and linguistic barriers, negotiated difference, and searched for a common context, they began to feel empowered, as is evident in the comments above. More than that, though, they began to create their own knowledge about the world. Roskelly (2003) described it as a profound realization: "As students of writing, your work in the group can help you become aware that the knowledge of the subject matter you work with, of voice, of forms and styles can be determined by you and those around you" (p. 150). Roskelly continues, broadening the scope of her ideas: "The more your group meets and talks about reading, writing, and ideas, the more your group collaborates, the more *authoring* [emphasis in original] you do" (p. 150). In this case, her assertions couldn't be truer, as these students, both domestic and international, have become the authors of their ideas.

In addition to their conceptualizations of American university life and academic experiences, ELS students were also asked by

graduate students about feelings of loss of culture or a longing for their home country throughout their stay in America. In essence, these excerpts show how global identities don't disappear once these international students shifted their lives to America. For many ELS students, it was their first time visiting the U.S. and expectations vary greatly between incoming international students, as do their attitudes about the country after they arrive. Below are excerpts from these conversations that illustrate their conclusions, some profound and some quite frank, that are drawn from their experiences abroad. Mohammed, a male from Saudi Arabia commented on feelings of longing for his home country after being away during a major holiday. He says:

> *In Ramadan, it was the only month that I felt homesick, only in Ramadan. Because in Ramadan, the family gathers, and it's really cool to live Ramadan back home. So, I was here and there was nothing. That was a really hard time. So I decided I'm not going to stay in U.S. ever during Ramadan. I will go home for sure. Home is where my family is. My family and my friends.*

Yazedjian (2013) argued for the importance of first seeking to understand the ideologies and norms of one's own culture, and then to seek out difference in other cultures. For both the TTU graduate students and the ELS students, interacting with one another did help them understand their own worldviews more thoroughly. The student above shares this understanding, and recognizes the importance of Ramadan, which for him is a local cultural norm, as an integral part of his culture. He frames it as one that he is not willing to ignore or forget, though he does so without criticizing the global values he receives from the United States. Truly, "it is from developing an understanding of the self that one can explore the rest of the world with a nonjudgmental attitude" (Yazedjian, p. 53). Additional examples of this same process of glocalization are seen below, as told by Ahmed, another male student from Saudi Arabia:

> *No, I don't think I feel any kind of loss or something toward my old culture, but I think I become more experienced, you know. I mean if you live in two different cultures, well I think this is a cool experience to have. I don't think I am forgetting any kind of my old culture.*
>
> *Like when I went to Miami and Kansas City on my break two months ago, I felt like I wanted to go to Lubbock. I was short on cash, you know I waited for the time I get in Lubbock, so it's like home I guess. Like here I live in an apartment or something, but over there I was like living in a hotel or something. It felt like home. When I thought about it, it was like I am missing my home or something.*

As seen above and below, both of these students are experiencing shifting identities as a result of their interactions with peoples from other cultures. It is important to remember here, too, that throughout their study at ELS and TTU, they will come in contact not only with students from America, but all over the world, where important transactions of ideas and values take place constantly. Khalid also offered his perspective:

> *Some person may lose their culture. I feel, let me think. Sometimes, not all, but sometimes I feel losing, but I deal with the people here like their culture. If I will go to my country, I will be as the culture there, because they have a different culture there. That's my opinion. I feel I adapt fast with the people. When I go back home, nothing happens. My brother told me he when I last went to Saudi Arabia that he saw many people who went to American and when he came home, he lost his culture here, but I am different. I don't lose my culture. But I treat the people like their culture. I'm different here and I'm different there.*

The perspectives here are as diverse as the students who provided them. Even though, in Saudi Arabia, where "education from an Islamic point of view makes little sense if one removes it from a religious context" (Reagan, 2010, p. 230), the students at ELS, regardless

of their country of origin, exhibit behaviors that vary greatly as they adjust from their previous school system to a new one. They all embrace local practices in Lubbock to different degrees, but they all bring global experiences and values to their academic and social experience in the U.S. The challenge for ELS teachers and their colleagues at TTU is to not only "demonstrate that reading and writing competence are vital to achieving membership in an educational literacy club, Discourse, or community of practice" (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005, p. 50), but also to demonstrate this effectively to our students, they must first engage in collaborative dialogue regarding experiences, values, and expectations of the academic community and the international student body.

The urgency of internationalization of campuses around the United States has been felt by many heads of higher education institutions, but not enough has been done to address it. What faculty and administrators need to engage in is a unified effort to provide purposeful, structured, and informative content and activities in their courses for all students, not just those in the humanities (Yazedjian, 2013). Then more powerful connections will be created between local and global perspectives.

Conclusions

Consider the assumptions of language and culture teachers make when students walk into our classrooms. If they do not have expected skill sets, why are teachers quick to lump those students into remedial groups or classes? What deficiencies do native English-speaking students have, as well, from the perspective of intercultural communication competence? Can specific cultural misunderstandings be better understood through examining cultural differences and similarities through investigating cultural dimensions and flexible and ever-changing -*scapes*, and through interacting and inhabiting the spaces that both native and non-native speakers come from? If students are unfamiliar with global communication practices in a global society, should teachers consider them, now, non-native to global citizenry and thus work to connect their curricular with immersive co-curricular diversity experiences? Certainly.

New knowledge does not replace what is already familiar. Instead, teachers need to practice a pedagogy of inclusivity to embrace the need for converging divergences. Teachers need to recognize that context is everything, that context is always changing, and that both teachers and students should try to learn the programmatic language of the operating systems of cultures. The concerns of the global should not replace those of the local, but our pedagogy must embrace both in more transactional ways. Intercultural competence goes beyond appreciation for diversity, and there are stages of development: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Bennett, 2004). Globalization has built bridges between cultures, but teachers and students should move beyond convenience or efficiency in bringing together the local and the global.

Intercultural communication competence is a collective consciousness that makes use of glocalization. Such competence helps support a new understanding to the familiar without disrupting in negative ways what is known so as to better both the local and the global. Course learning outcomes should involve recognizing difference, but not in superficial ways like how big one group is, how tough one neighborhood is, or even how separatist one's policies seem to be. In addition to these things, there is always culture and a lens through which students and teachers view the world. Individuals in groups have culture. Difficulty communicating with people who have different core beliefs and values, life experiences, material resources, political agendas, and native languages is what often divides the world the most. The classroom should be the space where these battles of differences and similarities can be presented in a safe way, where risks can be

taken. Teachers should teach intercultural communication competence in order to better recognize and develop the virtual transformation of the public sphere (Desai, 2013). Intercultural communication competence is critical to make sense of the feast of flexible and ever-changing viewpoints we encounter every day in order to transact and compose productive communicative moments in our lives. JCLL

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