Multilingual Students' Perceptions of Inclusiveness across the Curriculum

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Abstract

- The current survey- and interview-based study will report on **multilingual college students' perceived effectiveness** of the courses they were taking by focusing on the following pedagogical tools – lecture, class discussion, assigned readings, projects and others.

- Many of the participants reported similar teaching approaches and strategies that they believed enhanced content learning.

- The presentation will suggest **effective teaching strategies** in working with L2 students in courses across the curriculum..

This study

- **Initial aim**: to gain an emic perspective of multilingual students on effective learning
  - *Effective learning* defined as "a process that leads to change in knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes" (p. 3, Ambrose et al., 2010)
  - **Mulitlinguals (or L2 students)** include international students, late-arriving and early arriving students (Ferris, 2009).
- **Methods**
  - Survey :
    - 102 L2 students recruited from L2 sections of FYC (First Year Composition) and Human Communication courses at a large U.S. university
    - the components that you believe facilitate or hinder students' learning PLUS demographic information
  - Interviews:
    - 11 students from survey participants
    - Two to three interviews with each over the period of one year (ongoing)
- **Overarching Research Questions**
  - How do L2 college students experience courses across the curriculum?
  - What helps and hinders L2 college students' learning across the curriculum?

Survey findings (1)

- **Helps learning**
  - **Lecture** (N=78)
  - **Class discussion** (N=61)
  - Assigned readings (N=52)
  - Relationship with instructor (N=48)
  - Classroom climate (N=45)
  - Project (papers) (N=23)
  - Support from teaching assistant (N=20)
  - Support from tutoring center (N=17)
  - Reflection journal (N=12)

- **Hinders learning**
  - **Lecture** (N=48)
  - Assigned readings (N=40)
  - Classroom climate (N=27)
  - Projects (papers) (N=22)
  - Reflection journal (N=10)
  - Relationship with instructor (N=6)
  - **Class discussion** (N=5)

Survey findings (2) – Comments on facilitative factors

- **Lecture** was chosen as a critical component in facilitating learning by the largest number of participants.
  - "Lectures clearly describes **subject related concepts**"
  - "Lecture because the professor **elaborates and gives examples** of the topic"
  - "Many of us take this class just because it's required to take … The professor understands this issue and well- teaches history **through the story and showing us movies related to the topic we learn**."
  - I can learn things and additions to assigned readings and it[lecture] makes the topic **clear to understand**
- **Class discussion** helps understand readings and lectures better and learn from other students (different perspectives).
  - "It help to **understand more about the lesson** if you participate in the discussion."
  - "Class discussion helps **clarify assigned readings**."
  - "I get the chance to **hear others opinions and be able to formulate my own** during discussion."
  - "Class discussion enables us to **confront our points of view** on different topics."
  - "Class discussions help me especially because I get to hear other student's perspectives on the same topic and compare. It just helps me **look at things from other angles**."

Survey findings (3) – Comments on hindering factors

- **Lectures**: Unclear, confusing explanations/ fast delivery/ No elaboration of readings (reading off ppt slides)
  - "Lecture because it is hard to sit and listen to a lecture for over an hour."
  - "Lecture, because the teacher talks **too fast and not clear** sometimes, and I don't understand"
  - "I feel like the professor doesn't really know how to share his knowledge."

- **Assigned readings:** Difficulty in understanding content/ mismatch between readings and lecture/ A great amount of information/ language barrier to understanding readings
  - "Some of the readings can be very difficult to understand."
  - "[I] have to study by yourself most of the time, and [I] don't understand the subject, and **language is the barrier**"
  - "The readings because he gives us many pages to read and **we never get the chance to go over all of it**."

Interview phase of study

- 11 students from 8 countries interviewed

Pseudonyms	Countries	Self-reported L1s	Year	Majors	Years in the U.S.A.	Visa/ immigration status
Alexa	France	French/English	Junior	English	Two month	Student visa (exchange)
Mandy	Hong Kong SAR, China	Cantonese	Freshman	Sociology	One month	Student visa
Trang	Vietnam	Vietnamese	Freshman	Business	One month	Student visa
Milad	Iran	Farsi	Freshman	Business	10 years	Citizen
Lee	China	Mandarin	Freshman	Computer science		Citizen
Mina	Taiwan	Mandarin	Freshman	Biology	3 years	Resident
Cindy	Korea	Korean	Senior	Exercise science	16 years	Citizen
Bre	Guyana	Guyanese Creole	Sophomore	Computer Information System	2 months	Student visa
Jiyoung	Korea	Korean	Freshman	Education	6 years	Student visa
Soohee	Korea	Korean	Freshman	Hospitality	3 months	Student visa
Hyomin	Korea	Korean	Freshman	Biology	3 months	Student visa

Interview phase of study

Pseudonyms	Countries	Self-reported L1s	Year	Majors	Years in the U.S.A.	Visa/immigration status
Alexa	**France**	**French/English**	**Junior**	**English**	**Two months**	**Student visa (exchange program)**
Trang	Vietnam	Vietnamese	Freshman	Business	One month	Student visa

Alexa (1)
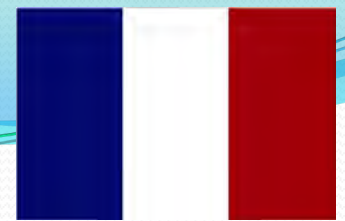
- Backgrounds
  - Exchange student from France/ Senior/ English major
  - 2 months in the U.S.A.
  - Multilingual (English/French/Malay/Mandarin)
- Facilitating factors
  - Encouragement of knowledge construction
    - "So in France we have this culture of the professor being the one who is right, the one who knows everything … And that's very different to here … in my literature classes [I] was able to **have a discussion with the professors** … **there is no one interpretation of the text**, and **it's encouraging to have professors actually tell you**" (1st Interview with Alexa).
    - So yeah that that also is also stimulating, mentally 'cause you're kind of motivated to work hard… It's not just one piece of paper **it's an exchange**. (2nd interview with Alexa)
  - Rapport with professors
    - I've actually come to appreciate the fact that we could interact with our professors as adults. … and we could talk to them outside of class for small like small matters. And **it creates this rhetoric where you feel encouraged to speak out and just be yourself.** (first interview with Alexa)
    - Here, the first day, the professors **call me by my name**…we were encouraged to do our best, and **we were spoken to like adults**.(1st interview with Alexa)

Alexa (2)

- Inhibiting factors
  - Not enough guidance & unclear goals
    - "'cause she gives us a list of possible techniques to look at. So imagery, characters, etcetera, but I think it would be more interesting to have each week a specific look at one technique 'cause it's **too broad**. It's like **we have too much choice, and we don't know what to do**." (2nd interview with Alexa)
- Lingua-cultural issues
  - Difference in rhetoric and structure in academic writing
    - Yes, because we had to respect the French methods, we had to have like three paragraphs, and inside those paragraphs we had to have three different ideas. ..So it's a thorough analysis, but there's a certain point where there's nothing more to say, so it's kind of redundant., but **yeah the writing style is very different** (second interview with Alexa)

Trang (1)

- Backgrounds
  - Freshman from Vietnam/ International student
  - Two months in the U.S.A.
  - Business major/ Wants to pursue a graduate degree
- Facilitating factors
  - An opportunity to engage in academic enculturation
    - I **learned about doing research.** … Based on my research, it's not bad. Actually, it's a good thing. It help the economy… So, **you need to do research to do paper**. That's what I learned. (Third interview with Tien)
  - Practicing varied skills while receiving quality feedback
    - IE: Oh, yeah. It [poster] is kind of a long process. It took most the time of my break. I had to do the poster, **I had to do my research. I also have to do the speech, and think of, and come up with what I'm going to say.** So, that's a lot of thing to do. …
    - IR: Oh, okay. So, what kind of things were helpful for you in that whole process?
    - IE: The script. It helped me to be more confident. It helped me to **know what I'm going to do if people come, you know, with different situation**. Yeah. (Second interview with Tien)

Trang (2)

- Inhibiting factors
  - Lack of culturally and historically embedded knowledge required in some courses
    - There [are] some words [in Business Law] I don't understand at all that not just English, but it's technical English. It's really hard. And yes, the background, **I don't know anything like when I come to hear congress, or like the amendment**, I don't know anything about it. So, it's just a lot of thing for me. (first interview with Tien)
  - Performance-oriented goals that are dominant in many courses
    - That is what is really sad about this semester. **I feel it is just study for test**, you know. … It's nothing creative at all. **… that's what you need to know, don't put anything else,** you're going to get an F for that. (third interview with Tien)
- Lingua-cultural issues
  - Improvement of communication skills through an on-campus job
    - Yeah. I have to communicate with my boss, like if I want to tell something. Sometimes we have like a one-on-one, and like I also talk to people, different people. For example, they ask what do we have for the menu, you know? And **I have to deal with different situation, which is like a really great thing. It help me with my critical thinking and problem solving**. Yeah, because like new problems just keep coming, coming. (third interview with Tien)

Strategies in working with multilingual students

- Focus on a process rather than a product (Ambrose et al., 2010)
  - Clear learning goals and expectations
  - Learner agency
  - Multiple, guided procedures and steps to follow in completing major assignments
  - Feedback that explicitly communicates about some aspect(s) of students' performance
- Create assessment tools that allow students to see intrinsic value (Cox, 2014)
  - Assessment that has intrinsic value, not just attainment value
  - Avoidance of tests whose primary aim is to differentiate students
- Create a venue in which students share ideas and perspectives (Zamel & Spack, 2006)
  - Balance between lecture and discussion
  - Assign discussion questions as homework so students have time to prepare answers in writing.
  - Allow time for students to formulate a response.

Strategies in working with multilingual students

- Consideration of L2 students' cultural, linguistic backgrounds
  - Explain technical terms and cultural references
  - Introduce resources for background knowledge L2 students can refer to
  - Provide lecture outlines
  - Avoid lengthy digression

- Sheltered courses for L2 students
  - Language support courses for L2 students
    - Learning to construct target culture rhetoric
    - Academic socialization
  - Provision of sheltered subject matter courses
    - Customized for L2 students' needs