English language instruction in a multilingual and multicultural academic setting: Introspections and perspectives (report)

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Abstract
Despite multilingualism and multiculturalism, English language is taught by teachers as they face impacts of globalization, diffusion, and disruption. Armed with ideas, practices, strategies, and perspectives, the English language teachers continue providing quality and relevant language instruction to their students both in virtual and onsite classes. Living in a borderless and boundless world makes learners acquire and learn other languages. As language and literature teachers, we have to be innovative in developing, designing, and implementing new curriculum and instruction that will cater to the needs and diversities of the learners. This reflective and narrative paper aims to discuss and describe the researcher's fruitful and thoughtful introspections on multilingualism and multiculturalism as they affect and effect online and offline ESL classes, and how teachers cope with the situation.

Keywords: *multilingualism, multiculturalism, school/academic setting, inclusivity, socialization*

In the rapid evolution of time, noticeable improvements are witnessed by people. In the academic setting, language teachers, among others, have been using technology and innovation to engage in instruction and assessment for their students. What seems to be challenging is the background knowledge and capability to manipulate all the available tools online.

Teachers and language teachers are trying to handle and manage learners of multicultural origin. When these learners come to school or attend virtual classes, they possess diverse and distinct culture. Some are even multilingual. How can language teachers effectively cultivate and nurture the potentials of learners amidst multicultural factors and reasons?

For assessment of perspectives, the researcher intended to examine the reflections of participants by asking this question: "How do you teach English in a multicultural setting"? The answers of participants were carefully analyzed to create big ideas and achieve synthesis.

Being in a multicultural area entails both opportunity and challenges. But as language teachers, we have to be prudent and responsive to the existing traits and qualities of ESL learners. They have predicaments and worries too especially, in the new setting brought about by the health crisis.

We might be asking how we as language teachers who are now virtual or online feel and see the multiculturalism of our students?

There is a need to emphasize the role of differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences as approaches and theory to carry out our responsibilities and obligations as educators and language teachers to be specific. Once, we have evaluated the traits of our learners, then we could easily redefine our goals and re-engineer the curriculum. Quality language instruction follows the scene.

Despite changes in the setting, the language teacher still needs to be responsive and flexible to meet the changing needs of students.

Language has particular roles in school as best justified by the new normal where students attempt to communicate and socialize with each other despite limited physical interaction. Through virtual

sessions, they try their best to interact with their classmates and send in important information and ideas.

Language variation in a multilingual and multicultural setting helps the language educator to be more receptive and dynamic in the design of curricula and development of teaching-learning materials by being well-oriented on the realities of the phenomena and/or issues that affect the transmission of ideas and socialization. The learning outcomes must be aligned with the changes, transitions, and realities of the social environment where people are working and interacting. As new changes come, the language users and learners should have the drive and enthusiasm to meet the expectations and standards with confidence and courage. The opportunities to learn and improve should be made available for teachers in line with multilingualism, multiculturalism, and socialization that have bearing on the success and progress of learning situation and performances of the students.

Literature review

The term "multilingualism" is applied to people who have fluency in more than one languages or to areas where many languages are being used. The Council of Europe provides a distinction between multilingualism as city, society, and state where many languages are spoken; on the other hand, pluralingualism is the characteristic of an individual who possesses pluralingual repertoire (Council of Europe, 2007). Multilingualism refers to the presence of mode of speaking of a group in which more than one variety of language is being spoken.

Diversity is inevitable and pervasive. In facing the challenges of diversity, it is clear that avoiding this phenomenon is never a solution. Diversity is existing and increasing. It is unavoidable and expanding. Students and teachers need to acquire the intercultural competencies to deal with the challenges and realities.

In the rapidly changing learning environment, language teachers are encountering social realities and academic concerns that require actionable plans for the improvement of language instruction. Today, new techniques and approaches are incorporated in the language classroom. The kind of instruction that being employed in the classroom is engaging, interesting, supportive, and inclusive. Among other factors that language teachers have to address, multiculturalism and multilingualism are predominant in the educational settings. A wide range of programs and activities are needed to address the changing environments and transitions of modalities so that curriculum and instruction can be upgraded and updated.

Many cities around the world promote a degree of multilingualism as pleasant factor in a globalized world. Other cities however, are not yet considered as multilingual because that is only regarded as almost incidental or temporary by people staying there. The speed of change caused mobility, communication modes, and new ways of business. The globalization phenomenon has brought about massive and rapid changes (Lid, 2018)

To foster moral, social, and intellectual development of all students to their maximum potential, it is essential that each student will be given equal opportunity to learn and socialize. The purpose of multicultural education is to provide a balanced and equal learning opportunity. This may be achieved through diverse but interrelated activities. Educational opportunities of all students should be equal and equitable so that all students including socially and economically disadvantaged ones can achieve the highest potentials (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

Transforming the learning environment according to Johnson and Johnson (2002) requires changes and improvements on hidden curriculum, teacher expectations, instructional strategies, community relations, and classroom climates.

Conclusions

The place of multilingualism in academic setting is naturally occurring and cannot be stopped. While language teachers are facing the challenges and transitions, they have to be flexible and reflective on the wide array of methods, strategies, approaches, and practices they can use to provide healthy learning atmosphere to their ESL and EFL classes. Knowledge of different strategies and principles can support language teachers on their quest for quality and relevant education that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive amidst transitions and uncertainties of the 21st century education and learning.

Language teachers in the Philippines needs to be (re) oriented and (re) educated on how they can handle multilingualism and multiculturalism in the class. Through this effort, they can find ways and means on how they can tap the abilities of their students at the same time, they can unleash the potentials of the learners. With proper training and orientation, I am sure learners can become more flexible, reflexive, and productive being multilingual and multicultural in the age of globalization and industrial revolution. More so, linguistic diversity is inevitable, instead of ignoring and disregarding its presence why not deal with it by looking into the advantages and perks which learners may enjoy in the future. Local languages in the Philippines are preserved and kept by allowing children and youth to acquire and develop the said languages. If we want to preserve national identify and culture, then we have to use our languages to the fullest. The language carries our identity, ideas, and culture. While we practice multilingualism, we can also continue to use and speak our local languages as we socialize with others.

Other than the presence of multilingualism and multiculturalism, language teachers need to be aware of the existing and dominant intelligences and learning styles of students. A knowledge of such areas will help language teachers to retool themselves and redesign the evaluation tools, procedures, and materials stored in the classroom environment. The ideas and constructs mentioned are important factors we have to consider when we are designing curricula and programs in school.

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