



Étude Exploratoire
**Learning Language
through Creativity
and Freedom!**
A Pilot Study

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Presentation Organization

- The Context: Cégep English in a Multilingual Québec
- The Framework: Raciolinguistics & Translanguaging
- The Study: « Étude exploratoire : Écriture créative et personnelle dans les cours d'anglais langue second au CÉGEP »
 - Participants, Methodology, Findings, Interpretation
- Limitations, Next Steps, Conclusions
- Q & A & Feedback



**Context:
Québec as a
multilingual
and
multicultural
society –
Some Stats!**

Half of Canada's population is estimated to consist of immigrants and second-generation individuals by 2036.

Meanwhile, of Québec's population: 22% will be immigrants; 22% will speak neither English or French as a mother tongue; and 28% will be visible minorities [racialized] (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Context: Québec as a multilingual and multicultural society

- Québec's growing linguistic and cultural diversity is reflected in the cégep student population
- This can be seen in the SONDAGE PROVINCIAL SUR LES ÉTUDIANTS DES CÉGÉPS (SPEC)

SPEC Results from Cégep du Vieux (2018)

Langue parlée le plus souvent à la maison (N = 538)

- Français : 80,5%
- Anglais : 9,1%
- Espagnol : 3,4%
- Arabe : 1,3%
- Créole haïtien : 1,1%
- Chinois (Mandarin/Cantonais) : 0,7%
- Autre : 4,0%

Autre langue parlée régulièrement à la maison (N = 235)

- Anglais : 63,8%
- Français : 11,5%
- Espagnol : 3,0%
- Créole haïtien : 3,0%
- Arabe : 1,7%
- Italien : 1,3%
- Chinois (Mandarin/Cantonais) : 0,9%
- Autre : 14,9%

Context: Tensions between identities

“Some research has also found an increased acceptance of immigrant populations across the provinces, with the caveat that the Québécois (and the Acadians) remain more suspicious of racialized groups in comparison with the rest of the population (Bilodeau & Turgeon, 2014). This would seem to suggest that linguistic insecurity is conducive to negative attitudes towards cultural diversity.” (Cardinal & Léger, 2019, emphasis added)



Overarching Research Question:

{How} Can English teachers in Quebec provide a
space to

Value linguistic and cultural diversity, while also
Supporting linguistic security, linguistic identities?

Frameworks: English Teachers Can Build Bridges

Translanguaging

Raciolinguistics

Meaningful Literacy



1) Translanguaging

- Shift from monolingual to bilingual to *translingual* understandings of language learning (Garcia & Li, 2014)
- Dynamic bilingualism: Learning a new language does NOT impede or “hurt” other languages (Garcia, Cummins, Grosjean)
- See language as a fluid semiotic system; focus on translanguaging pedagogy that supports students’ competency in entire system
- Translanguaging can be leveraged to explicitly highlight the connections between race and language by “link[ing] the production of alternative meanings to transformative social action” (García & Li, 2014, p. 37).
- In other words, translanguaging in a classroom setting can challenge racist language hierarchies by legitimizing ‘non-dominant’ forms of language and empowering students’ translingual identities

2) Raciolinguistics


- Rosa and Flores (2015) “offer a perspective from which students classified as long-term English learners, heritage language learners, and Standard English learners can be understood to inhabit a shared racial positioning that frames their linguistic practices as deficient regardless of how closely they follow supposed rules of appropriateness” (p. 1).
- While the concept of raciolinguistics has grown out of the racial and political context of the United States, it is applicable to the Canadian and Quebec contexts as well and can be used to shed light on the oppressive nature of language teaching and policies here, as well as to propose alternatives for equitable and decolonizing teaching practices.
- Ex: Indigenous students forced to not speak languages in residential schools; International students being forced to prove level of English or French with standardized tests (TOEFL, TEF)

3) **Meaningful Literacy**

- Developing *voice* through *meaningful literacy* (Canagarajah, 2015; Hanauer, 2011)
- *Voice* as an indicator of engagement in the learning process as well as ownership over the new language
- *Meaningful literacy*: emphasis on emotion and engagement in writing and language learning to support the development of a multilingual voice/identity
- Increase learning and motivation through personal, emotional, process oriented creative writing

**Framework:
Translanguaging +
Raciolinguistics +
Meaningful Literacy
= Translingual
Personal Narrative
Writing?**

- Translingual Personal Narrative Writing in English Classrooms
 - Support overall development of language apparatus
 - Support linguistic diversity
 - Support multilingual identity development
 - Challenge oppressive monolingual standards



Creative writing is a powerful tool!

Zhao (2015) suggests that "...L2 creative writers can undertake creative writing not only for the purposes of language or literary acquisition, but also simultaneously for the achievements of certain self-identification and hence self-esteem, which in turn feeds into positive motivation for language learning" (p. 2).

Kim & Park (2020) assert that "...autobiographical poetry is a promising tool to create translingual space where meaningful convergence of multiple languages and of linguistic and meaning negotiations can occur for self-expression and linguistic knowledge including word choice, rhetorical choices, and style. Accordingly, poetry writing might be one way of "integrating writing within its broader focus on developing all communicative skills in an additional language" in the field of TESOL (Canagarajah, 2015, p. 429)." (p. 306)

Pilot Study @ CVM:
**« Étude exploratoire :
Écriture créative et
personnelle dans les
cours d'anglais langue
second au CÉGEP »**

The Unit: [Translingual] Personal Narrative Writing

- Students write several different pieces in class in response to different prompts, ex.:
 - “Write about an experience that has impacted who you are”
 - “Draw a place that is important to you, write about it”
 - Writing sensory poems, working with a group to write metaphors, etc.
- Mini-lessons on vivid imagery, dialogue, text-structure, sentence-structure, and authentic voice
- Study model texts by students and by published authors to learn about personal narrative as a genre and to get inspiration for text structure
- Focus is on fluency, personal interest, and developing confidence *rather than* grammatical correctness or obtaining “native-like” competence
- Students share their drafts and give feedback to one another
- I also write with them and share my drafts
- Students **were invited to write in multiple languages** [one model text included French dialogue]



Research Questions for Exploratory Study

RQA: Does Translingual Personal Narrative Writing actually support overall linguistic development?

RQB: Does Translingual Personal Narrative Writing support linguistic diversity and multilingual identity?

RQC: Does Translingual Personal Narrative Writing support linguistic security and confidence?

Participants

- Level of English class: 4P4 (103B)
- Student ability in English ranged from Advanced-Intermediate to English mother tongue
- Invited 50+ students to participate (all students in 2 groups)
 - Beginning of Covid - difficult to contact students
- No. of participants: 12

Data: Reflections & Self-evaluations of TPNW

- Students were asked to reflect on and evaluate their writing process.
- Focus on analyzing Q1, Q3 and Q4 for focus on student learning and awareness

Reflection Questions:

Q1: Process: *Tell me about your process – how did you get from beginning to end in writing this narrative?...*

Q2: Strengths: *Annotate your own text (literary devices)*

Q3: Areas of growth: *Where does this narrative fall short? If you had months ahead of you, what would you change or work on first?*

Q4: Self-evaluation: *Students give themselves a grade using a checklist, and comment on their organization, sentence style, use of literary devices, word choice, and grammar/vocabulary/spelling/conventions.*

Analysis

- Inductive coding (Polio & Friedman, 2016)
- Used NVivo software
 - Coded data by hand twice
 - Also used Nvivo's "autocode" function
- Poetic Analysis (Saldaña, 2011)
- Looked for themes related to language development
 - Ex. understanding of writing techniques used in class
- **HOWEVER** Surprised by number of times themes related to freedom, fun, emotions and peer interaction surfaced!

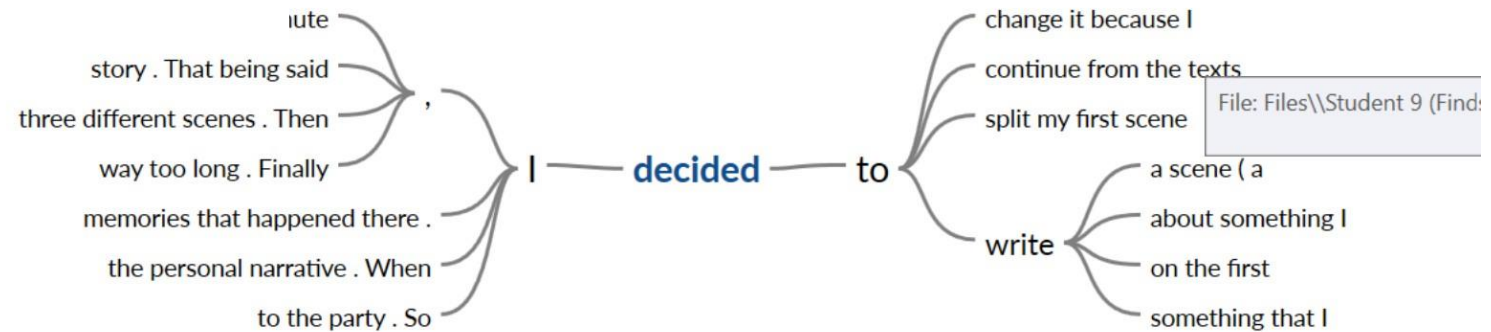
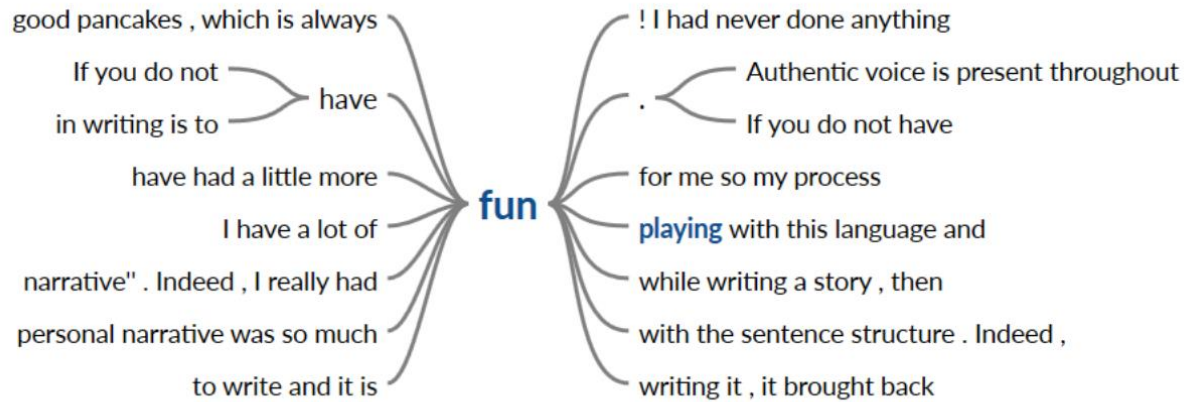
Finding 1: Mentor texts as a strong resource

- “When I wrote I used [examples of personal narratives] as reference. I observed how the author explained a place or how they made us feel emotions....As I was writing, I often had to stop myself and look for details I could add so my writing was richer”
- “Then, I started studying some text to improve my story telling, and the special effect that I can create in a text so it is more interesting.”

Finding 2: Focus on choice and fun facilitates writing:

- “Indeed, I really had fun writing it, it brought back so many great memories, it didn’t really feel like doing some school work.”
- “...I decided to write something that I would enjoy writing for the personal narrative. When I decided to write about something funny, everything went smoothly”

Choice & Fun



Finding 3: A focus on emotion, memory, and senses facilitates writing & development of voice:

I drew my attic and remembered

...Her...

The first time she came over

Great memories

Good emotions

I chose, I decided

It was easy to write

My voice is very authentic

Finding 4: Emphasis on fluency, writing many texts, peer feedback, and revising facilitates awareness of writing quality & confidence

All these exercises gradually work on more and more vivid imagery I'd like to add even more adds a lot of quality to a narrative. Feedback from my classmates enriched my text a lot! They had a bunch of ideas! challenging to find how to write it, though. I could also work on: transitions epic detail making my voice even more unique more precise vocabulary.

**Finding 5: Conflict
between enjoying
writing, feeling
proud and feeling
insecure about
English
proficiency**

English is not my first language
I'm limited in the use of sophisticated
sentences

I'm not sure I could have done better

But

I could improve

I could have added

I could have use

I did the best I could

This is one of my weakness I think, my
vocabulary is not that strong.

I don't think I'm perfect with that (grammar,
spelling, conventions).

I like my writing and

hopefully I will get better in English

Interpretation: Reflecting on Research Questions

RQA: Does Translingual Personal Narrative Writing actually support overall linguistic development?

- *Findings suggest YES: Students increased metalinguistic development and awareness of writing skills and strategies.*

RQB: Does Translingual Personal Narrative Writing support linguistic diversity and multilingual identity?

- *Evidence unclear; but some evidence points to the development of a strong voice*

RQC: Does Translingual Personal Narrative Writing support linguistic security and confidence?

- *Students reported feeling proud of their work - could be an indication of linguistic security.*

Limitations & Next Steps

Limitation 1: Reflection questions did not ask specifically about Translanguaging, and Only 1 student used French as a literary device in an English text:

- **Next Steps:**

- Include more emphasis on and explanation of translingual writing in the teaching unit
- Specifically ask students about impressions of translingual writing in reflection

Limitation 2: No evidence that students questioned language hierarchies or felt more comfortable with linguistic diversity or more confident in their multilingual identities.

- **Next Steps:**

- Include reflection activities in the teaching unit to explore language identity
- Conduct interview with students to get a better idea about their language identities.

Conclusions

- Personal narrative writing seems to facilitate the development of student skills in writing; developing awareness of writing strategies, word choices
- Personal narrative writing is enjoyable and meaningful: Motivation, and retention?
- Further study is needed, however, units and materials on translanguaging and creative writing COULD BE a useful inclusion in future EAL course packs
- I will be conducting a follow-up study this coming year!

Thank you!

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Resources for Teaching Translingual & Creative Writing

- [*Write Beside Them: Risk, Voice and Clarity in High School Writing*](#) by Penny Kittle
 - Excellent description of how to craft a personal narrative (or other) writing units with tips on how to create a classroom of writers
- [*Living Voices: Multicultural Poetry in the Middle School Classroom*](#) by Jaime R. Wood
 - Beautiful poetry paired with mini-lessons! Easy to use, and honestly works very well with cégep students, too!
- [*Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-Racist Practice*](#) by Suhanthie Motha
 - Reflections on teaching English in our modern world
- [*Let's not forget that translanguaging is a political act*](#) blog post by Nelson Flores
 - Explanation of translanguaging and why it is important
- [*Introduction to Translingual Writing*](#) by OWL Purdue
 - Ideas for using translanguaging in your own classroom, as well as suggested readings 😊

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