

*Pedagogies of Voice: Re-imagining the Role of Languages in Education for a World on the Move*  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed workshop will generate insights to inform an interdisciplinary pedagogical framework and research agenda to guide how to leverage all students' linguistic and cultural resources to maximize their learning potential and contribute to more equitable and inclusive communities. Deliberately interdisciplinary, this workshop will merge insights across four research areas that are rarely put in dialogue with one another: (1) migration and socio-emotional development; (2) multilingualism and literacy development; (3) global competence and intercultural development; (4) arts and aesthetic development. We'll bring together developmental and educational researchers with expertise across these areas, educators who are the architects of well-recognized pedagogies designed for and with multilingual learners yet implemented in English-dominant classrooms representative of the majority of US schools, and education administrators with proven records of transformative leadership.

This workshop grows out of the Re-imagining Migration seminar "Mapping Human Migration: Setting the Educational Agenda," supported by the Spencer Foundation and held at Harvard University in April 2019. One key recommendation that emerged from this broad-reach seminar (topics ranged from population genetics to refugees and human rights) was the urgent need for a novel interdisciplinary-informed and socioculturally inclusive framework to guide how language can be conceptualized and used in education today. Radcliffe's support will propel a novel pedagogical framework and researcher-practitioner partnerships without which the ultimate goal of preparing a future collaborative interdisciplinary research proposal would be very hard to achieve. The Radcliffe accelerator workshop offers the optimal springboard to move forward this pioneering interdisciplinary initiative at the intersection of education, social justice, and law.

## KEY QUESTIONS

### **Question 1**

How and why do we need to re-conceptualize language(s) in school to help maximize immigrant-origin students' and their peers' learning potential and contribute to build more equitable and inclusive societies? Specifically, we will examine: (a) novel foundational ideas about language, learners and learning; (b) language abilities, practices, and mindsets worth nurturing; (c) learning demands to overcome; and (d) social justice norms in language education suited for a world on the move.

### **Question 2**

Which actionable pedagogical principles can we derive from promising and research-based teaching practices designed to maximize all students' learning potential and to build more equitable and inclusive classrooms? Specifically, we will examine: promising learning experiences, equitable patterns of interactions, as well as the challenges they present for learners and teachers and their implications for teacher preparation.

## PROPOSAL

*Hamdi is in second grade. The child of a Somali refugee family in the Portland Public Schools, he writes about settling in the long winters of Maine and his grandmother's desperate insistence to return home to bring those left behind. Feeling unprepared for a conversation about Hamdi's experience, his well-meaning teacher corrects only his spelling and punctuation. After all, she explains conflictedly, she is primarily responsible for Hamdi's English mastery and the Common Core State Standards. Hamdi's Portland-born peers look at him from afar.*

Migration across nations is reaching historic proportions, placing immigrant children, like Hamdi, at the forefront of rapidly changing educational landscapes and calling urgently for a new interdisciplinary research agenda on the role of languages in education. Increasingly, migration and concomitant offline and online experiences of linguistic straddling, cultural interactions and hybridity are the new normal. They permeate our daily lives, classrooms, and neighborhoods. They create the new dynamic, complex, diverse sociolinguistic and cultural fabric in which young people's lives unfold, requiring new forms of adaptive fluidity across cultures and languages. Educators charged with preparing future generations are struggling to respond to these new scenarios and ponder "What matters most to teach to whom and why?" The monolingual uniformity that permeates educational practice, policy, and research does not respond to the multilingual world that students, educators, and researchers need to navigate today. Education in the U.S., and around the world, continues to exhibit a monolingual habitus, a worldview that privileges linguistic and cultural uniformity and views linguistic diversity as a problem (Gogolin, 2002; Ruíz, 1984). At school, many students are assessed as "deficient" in the dominant language of society (English in the U.S.). Meanwhile, their multilingual and multicultural assets are rendered invisible and their personal stories and journeys find no place in their classrooms. Schools contribute to spreading the myth of uniformity, concealing –instead of acknowledging and promoting the understanding of— multicultural and multilingual ways of life. The latest anthropological and linguistics research suggests that a multilingual habitus benefits learning and inclusion. Perhaps, counterintuitively to many, research shows that welcoming and leveraging home languages and cultures, facilitates, rather than impedes, learning the language and cultural ways of the dominant society (Benson, 2013; Hornberger, 2019). Yet, such insights have not been translated to mainstream classroom practices, nor investigated systematically in these contexts. Imbuing educational environments with a multilingual worldview that leverages the multilingual and multicultural resources of diverse learners has the potential to transform immigrant-origin learners but also their peers and society at large. To move in this direction, a drastic paradigm shift in the design, implementation, and research of school learning is in order.

This proposed two-day workshop will merge insights from four areas of research: (1) migration and socioemotional development; (2) multilingualism and literacy development; (3) global competence and intercultural development; and (4) arts and aesthetic development. We will convene expert developmental and educational researchers across these areas, innovative educators who are the architects of three well-recognized English-based pedagogical approaches designed for and with multilingual learners, and administrators who are known to be transformative leaders. Face-to-face cross-disciplinary dialogue grounded in case studies and video examples from research-based pedagogies will enable the production of a new interdisciplinary framework and research agenda on how to leverage all learners' linguistic and cultural resources to maximize their learning potential and contribute to building more equitable and inclusive societies.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUTH IN CONTEXT

Advancing a new conception of languages in education for a world on the move begins with understanding immigrant-origin youth from a cultural cognitive and socio-emotional developmental perspective (Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2020; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Ochs, 1993). Today, over a quarter of U.S. children under the age of 18 are immigrants or the children of immigrants--a trend expected to rise in the next decades (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013). While some are integrating into their new land successfully, many face significant challenges to adapt (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). For immigrant-origin children and youth, the challenges of learning a new language are often compounded with their newcomer status, poverty, low levels of parental education, trauma, racialization, and undocumented status, all of which can compromise healthy development and integration (Halle, et al., 2014; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2015; Yoshikawa, et al., 2013).

Non-immigrant children in “receiving contexts” also experience demographic, cultural and linguistic changes as a result of migration. Some enjoy positive social expectations and economic opportunities, while others live in historically homogeneous, yet rapidly changing communities, unprepared to integrate new arrivals. The majority of peers that immigrant students encounter come from vulnerable minoritized racial or linguistic communities themselves. These groups meet and co-inhabit educational institutions where legal insecurity, discrimination, and social fragmentation are on the rise (Rogers, 2017; 2019) and academic and socio-emotional growth are all too often interrupted rather than intentionally supported (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2015).

Often today, caring teachers in English learning classes across K-12 grades view their responsibility as ensuring that students master the mechanics of language, unintentionally limiting their expectations. In so doing they disregard students’ life experiences, reduce their access to rich content, and isolate them from their peers, exacerbating their “othering” and limiting instead of expanding their learning potential (Strom & Boix Mansilla, 2019). Ironically, this also reduces their English development opportunities (McCabe, et al., 2013; Hoff, 2018). Needed is a new conception of language learning, instruction, and use in schools, a view that integrates the cognitive, cultural, socio-emotional aspects of teaching and learning. A conception that goes beyond a view of language as skills, to embrace a view of language(s) as meaning-making instruments. Such a view would leverage the rich repertoire of experiences and cultural practices unfolding in multiple languages and contexts that are closely linked to learners’ lives, identities, socio-emotional development, and sense of belonging and inclusion.

## REIMAGINING THE ROLES OF LANGUAGE(S) IN LEARNING: THREE PEDAGOGIES OF VOICE

The proposed workshop is unique in its focus on a world on the move as the point of departure to reimagine language; in bringing together an interdisciplinary group of expert educators, administrators, theorists, artists and developmental and educational researchers selected for maximum diversity in perspectives, research area, and disciplinary training; in examining approaches that can be applied along the full developmental arc from Kindergarten to high school; and in grounding the discussion and work in three exemplary and promising pedagogies that can inspire theories and practices able to engender a multilingual habitus in education.

Education today, and especially instruction designed to expand the English proficiency of multilingual learners, functions with a narrow conception of language, prioritizing assessment and instruction of isolated language elements through tasks that rarely engage learners in authentic meaningful language use. Sadly, and perhaps not surprisingly, the results are far from satisfactory. Adolescents’ low literacy

levels in the U.S. and around the world reflect an urgent crisis (NAEP, 2019; OECD, 2018) and point to the need to reframe the role of language in education through transformational pedagogies able to yield deeper learning.

Our proposed workshop will ground collective deliberations across multiple disciplines and sectors on three high-quality, research-based educational practices. Cases serve as a shared platform for meaningful cross-disciplinary exchange and ensure that the work advanced engages with the real problems and possibilities of multilingual classrooms. These three pedagogical approaches visibly embody a multilingual habitus, are grounded in the latest research and have been implemented and evaluated by leading educators in US public schools across elementary and secondary grades and in classrooms populated by multilingual learners but where English is the language of instruction. The chosen practices share a constructivist stance, a view of languages as meaning-making tools; an emphasis on personal expression; and a deliberate commitment to narrowing achievement and recognition gaps (Lamont, 2018). At the same time, they are complementary in the variety of symbol systems they employ (visual, verbal, oral, written), and their primary focus for language use (autobiography, intercultural reasoning, translation, and creativity).

#### 1. ACCORDION BOOKS: Employing visual and verbal languages in reflective autobiographies

Blending traditional bookmaking, reflective and artistic practices, accordion books invite young people to capture, visualize, and develop creative and ongoing inquiries. Drawing on artistic creations and provocations, students physically construct their biographies with intentionally artistic forms of storytelling, verbally and visually (e.g., selecting a metaphoric turn, a visual abstraction, a symbol) and revisiting experiences, while becoming inspired and growing in language, self-knowledge, and self-reflection. In sharing their accordion books, students choose which pieces of their autobiographies are open or hidden to others. As students draw from multiple languages and modalities in constructing and sharing their autobiographies with peers and teachers, they expand their creativity and their English skills in order to sharpen their own meanings, reflect about their lives, communicate with others and learn about others' lives (Mistry & Elkin, 2016)

#### 2. GLOBAL THINKING ROUTINES: Cultivating intercultural habits of mind by making thinking visible

Resulting from Harvard Project Zero's extensive research on high-end cognition, Global Thinking Routines are micro-interventions that foreground students' own perspectives and meaning-making, making it visible, nurturing intercultural habits of mind and shifting the locus of voice from teachers to students across ages, disciplines and learning contexts. Routines are meant to be used regularly, shifting classroom cultures to foster students' thinking and expressive disposition, and allowing all learners to bring their linguistic and cultural resources to expand the conversation and reflection about world events, cultural artifacts and global challenges (Boix Mansilla, 2018; Ritchhart & Church, 2020).

#### 3. POETRY INSIDE OUT: Inviting students to translate poems from unknown languages

In this original youth-centered pedagogy, students translate into English poems written in other languages, including languages unfamiliar to them. Students start by reading aloud a biography of the poet (in English) and the poem (in its original language or in a transliterated version for alternative orthographies). As they work in groups to translate the poem, students use a "translator's glossary" as a resource and examine and discuss vocabulary, poetic form, grammar, rhythm, and other nuances, as they try to produce a poem that "flows." A public reading of each group's translation of the same poem sparks a discussion on the poem's meaning and the different language choices made across groups. Students and teachers learn to appreciate one another's skills, experiences, and cultural and linguistic resources, increasing their awareness of English and other languages' choices. Units culminate with the

individual or collaborative production of students' own poems (Park et al., 2015).

#### HOW THESE PEDAGOGIES WILL INFORM OUR FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PLAN

We'll analyze the selected pedagogies in light of research evidence from multiple disciplines (migration and socio-emotional development, literacy, interculturality, arts) in order to theorize about language learning and to understand the opportunities and challenges that teachers and students encounter as they enact a multilingual habitus. Below, we offer examples of entry points for our analysis.

Language as gateway and gatekeeper. Both in instruction and in daily exchanges, languages play ubiquitous roles as "gateways" or "gatekeepers", mediating how young people learn, express themselves, construct their identities, forge relationships, bridge cultural differences and sustain communities (Shin, 2013; Uccelli, et al., 2020). Through languages, educators can deepen students' learning, but they can also obstruct understanding; they can affirm and validate students' voices, or they can devalue and silence them. A multilingual habitus has the potential of supporting languages as gateways by recognizing multiple discursive forms as cultural, aesthetic, socio-emotional, civic affordances to support learning and inclusive communities.

The selected pedagogies illustrate classrooms where students' authentic voices, stories and full language/cultural repertoires become levers to advance deeper learning, including learning English, through accessible and inclusive yet cognitively demanding content and reasoning. We'll analyze how teachers in these pedagogies strategically promote "languages as gateway" while staying alert to instances of "language as gatekeeper."

These pedagogies of voice also illustrate how two views, often perceived as incompatible in the literacy field, can be integrated: the views of language learning as skill acquisition vs. sociocultural participation. Skill acquisition. Our own research, in the U.S. and internationally, leads us to argue that without understanding and addressing the sizable variability in students' language skills, schools run the risk of maintaining and exacerbating inequalities that exist in the larger society: students who at home are socialized into the language and literacy practices valued at school will continue to have a better chance of achieving academic success than those who do not have access to such practices either inside or outside of school (Uccelli, et al., 2015). Recent research points to discussion-based approaches as one of the best mechanisms to promote advanced language skills relevant for literacy (Jones, et al., 2019), yet discussion approaches driven by a monolingual habitus run the risk of further isolating multilingual students.

Sociocultural participation. Growing up, children participate regularly in "ways with words" in particular contexts (e.g., talking to friends, teachers) that socialize them into the unspoken cultural rules of their communities, help them understand who they are and where they belong (Heath, 1983; 2012). The language interactions in which we participate continue to shape, reflect, and construct our identities and imagined communities (Anderson, 1991). "Language is the skin that we speak" (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008), telling others who we are. Because human cognitive capacities have evolved in a way that leads humans to think categorically about groups, differences in "ways with words," even within the same language, often lead to stereotypes that interrupt communication, relationship building, and learning. This diversity often exacerbates divisions that can be turned into inclusion only with intentional restructuring (Tienda, 2013). Identities as "clusters of stories that we tell about ourselves and others tell about us" (Anzaldúa, 1999) are dynamic and malleable and language interactions, including classroom interactions, are a channel to constantly reorganize who we are and how we relate to the social world (Norton, 1997). School requires learning skills and new "ways with words," yet how to amplify learning while affirming

out-school languages and their identities is an urgent challenge for which these pedagogies of voice offer promising insights.

In sum, the selected pedagogies enact a non-conventional conceptualization of language-in-education and foster language, socio-emotional, and intercultural abilities, practices and mindsets that have not been brought to the surface nor articulated cohesively to enrich each other and guide further instructional efforts. The dialogue and collaborative activities planned among designers of these pedagogies, researchers, and administrators will be grounded on case studies and classroom videos in order to have common points of references as we discuss what is feasible or challenging in integrating these views of language learning, what does it take to enact change, what this change actually entails, and which principles can best capture a move towards pedagogies of voice.

Our research in classrooms with multilingual immigrant-origin students has shed light on the affordances of valuing and leveraging students' out-of-school experiences, languages and cultures (Boix Mansilla et al., 2020; Uccelli & Aguilar, 2018). In a world where societies are ever more diverse, those who can flexibly move across cultures and ways of using languages are better equipped to communicate successfully across boundaries (Commission on Language Learning, 2017). A reconceptualization of the role of language(s) in human development and social inclusion in schools is in order.

### **Desired Outcome(s)**

Through this workshop, we endeavor to respond effectively to the demands that a world shaped by migration presents to educators charged with preparing students for an increasingly dynamic multilingual and multicultural world. We seek to recast the role that language can play in today's schools--a priority deemed urgent at the Re-imagining Migration seminar "Mapping Human Migration: Setting the Educational Agenda" (Boix Mansilla, 2020).

The proposed Accelerator Workshop will yield two outcomes:

First, we will discuss the main insights learned from educational practice, research and leadership to inform a new multilingual educational framework. In this discussion, we will seek to articulate the foundations of a new conception of language in education and to redefine the teaching of English and conceptual understanding across the curriculum through instructional practices which: (a) are driven by a multilingual worldview; (b) adopt a social-justice-informed lens of languages as "gateway" (not "gatekeeper"); and (c) integrate socioculturally-centered, socio-politically-conscious and skill-based approaches. On the basis of the key insights and multiple perspectives articulated during this seminar, Paola Uccelli and Verónica Boix Mansilla will draft a framework with a novel conceptualization of language in education and a set of guiding pedagogical principles to share with all participants.

Second, during this workshop, we will discuss which types of interdisciplinary research-practitioner partnerships and which concrete plan of actions can inform a future research proposal to investigate innovative pedagogies aligned with the proposed framework through multidisciplinary, multimethod, multi-site approaches. Funding from Radcliffe will offer an invaluable opportunity to bring together experts across disciplines and sectors to accelerate this work and come to a consensus on a research agenda to shed further light on an urgent and complex problem of practice.

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