Creating a Classroom of Access: Learner Identity and Intercultural Communicative Competence

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CREATING A CLASSROOM OF ACCESS: LEARNER IDENTITY 
AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

by

Kallen Brunson

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Logan, Utah

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ABSTRACT

CREATING A CLASSROOM OF ACCESS: LEARNER IDENTITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

by

Kallen Brunson: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2022

Major Professor: Dr. Sarah Gordon
Department: World Languages & Cultures

This portfolio represents the coursework, readings, writings, classroom observations, teaching experiences, and reflections during my time in the Utah State University Masters in Second Language Teaching program. It is composed of three main components: my teaching philosophy, reflections on a selection of classroom observations of other instructors, and a position paper on World Englishes and pragmatics. Additionally, this portfolio gives background on the professional environment of the author and looks forward to the future.

The main paper consists of a position paper regarding World Englishes and cultivating identity and intercultural communicative competence, supplemented by a paper on incorporating pragmatics into the classroom. As such, it is the result of a review of current literature surrounding the topic and an effort to provide an approach that can be implemented within the classroom. It gives an overview of the native speaker myth and predominant ideologies in English language learning, suggesting how language teachers may combat stereotypes and hegemonic views through multiliteracies approaches and pedagogies of care.

(54 pages)
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I recall hearing once that it takes a village to raise a child. This portfolio is my child, and it would not be here without so many people trying to support me, especially in this last year or so. Everyone that I have come across has been instrumental in helping me along the way—either by listening to me babble about pedagogical theories or allowing me the space to feel like an imposter before building me back up again. I am so grateful to all of you.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL - American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

CoP - Communities of Practice

EFL - English as a Foreign Language

ESL - English as a Second Language

L1 - First Language

L2 - Second Language

MSLT - Master of Second Language Teaching

NESTs - Native English-Speaking Teachers

NNESTs - Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers

TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

USU - Utah State University
INTRODUCTION

This teaching portfolio is composed of a collection of frameworks and practical and theoretical approaches that I have developed over the course of my time in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. It begins with reflections on my teaching environment and teaching philosophy and includes examples of my coursework, including a position paper and sample lesson plans. By combining my experiences and knowledge about geopolitics, global flows, and the hierarchies of the world, I have developed a core belief system about how English has functioned as a language and the implications of learning and using it. Thus, drawing from my real-life experience as a language learner and someone who interacts regularly with non-native speakers, my portfolio reflects certain language teaching views that I have been drawn to during my studies and teaching experiences at Utah State University. It is a careful examination of what I value most as both a language learner and a teacher.

As a teacher, I have tried to put access and cultural competence at the forefront of any endeavor revolving around language learning. My Teaching Philosophy displays the three main components I deem to be most important above all: centering intercultural communicative competence, being supportive of hidden identities, and creating environments that benefit all learners in understanding language dynamics. This way, whenever I walk into a classroom environment similar to one outlined in my Professional Environment, I will be equipped to foster a safe, inclusive environment that is conducive to learning for all learners.

My portfolio explores how teaching a language should be holistic, accessible, and inclusive, situating a learner’s previous experiences within the language learning process and allowing them to transform the language in a way that they will understand and use. Doing this provides the space for learner growth in which they feel comfortable enough in the classroom environment to fully open up and be receptive to new concepts, worldviews, and different cultural ideologies. Furthermore, developing intercultural communicative competence allows students to examine their current attitudes surrounding specific stereotypes (such as the native speaker myth) and how one
might interact with a different culture. I believe in incorporating a pragmatic approach that recognizes differences versus core values and reconciles both.

The remaining pieces of this portfolio, including my classroom observations, position paper, and other reflections and examples, all represent a synthesis of teaching practices that solidified the pillars of my teaching philosophy, with a look to the future as I move forward into a more professional identity as a teacher and language advocate following the MSLT program. My goals for this program have never wavered from being able to foster community through shared values and language across different paths of life, emphasizing the importance of connection and communication despite borders and barriers. In this, I hope that I can carry the frameworks I have learned during my time in the program into the teaching or advocacy work I pursue later, specifically regarding world Englishes and language revitalization.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As a heritage speaker of Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese Hokkien, language has been the medium through which I have found community. Connection to language provides a place of shared being, values, narratives, and a sense of belonging. Because of this, my professional teaching environment is geared towards language advocacy in either Taiwanese Hokkien (working in language revitalization) or with refugees and immigrants in centers for English language learning across all age ranges. In developing my ever-evolving teaching philosophy, my experiences both teaching and being a tutor for university-level beginning Chinese at Utah State University, in advocacy, and as a volunteer working with ESL/EFL learners at the English Language Learning Center in Logan have helped me shape my approaches. Both professional environments have reinforced what I believe: that language should not be another border to be crossed, rather a connection through which we may express our lived experiences and identities and discover other perspectives and stories. Stories allow an authentic look into what is unknown and ask us to build bridges through both shared and new experiences. Below, my teaching philosophy statement explores some ways in which teachers may help language learners build these bridges.

Language and Identity

The first words I learned in Taiwanese Hokkien, my heritage language, were pháiⁿ-sè and a-tok-á. I first learned to apologize, and then I learned what a foreigner was. I just did not expect the foreigner to be me. This made me feel separate from both my family and the classroom. As a heritage speaker, this recurring experience of otherness and alienation reminds me to be mindful of different backgrounds and how it might feel to be a “foreigner” in a language classroom as a learner. Empathy is an essential element in my teaching, for these reasons. Because my own background was different from those around me growing up, I also remain mindful of the fact that privilege shapes experience and that having that privilege or lack of it may shape access—access to education in general and to language learning more specifically. In order to become a competent language learner, a student needs to understand and comprehend the circles that they inhabit (e.g.
socio-economic and geopolitical), and simultaneously, how the world can restrict them from gaining access into other circles based on perceived differences or use of specific standards (e.g., speaking a different world English or having a different accent). Native English speakers must relinquish the idea that they can walk into another country and be catered to simply because English is considered by many to be a lingua franca. Thus developing intercultural communicative competence becomes not just an addition or afterthought to learning grammar and vocabulary, but absolutely necessary in navigating the world today.

Access, identity, and intercultural competence are all key in my teaching. An effective teacher is a facilitator, helping to bridge the gaps between the first culture and the target culture. A teacher often provides an introduction to a new culture, a new perspective, and even a new attitude about being a global citizen. As students immerse themselves in a language through a classroom or a natural environment, they become part of a network spanning different countries, cities, and communities. The teacher may share their own culture and identity and encourage students to express their own as well. In addition to resisting the hegemony of English, my teaching philosophy focuses on creating classroom environments that: provide inclusive access for all, allow for accommodation of hidden identities, and center intercultural communicative competence that draws upon learners discovering the language dynamics that affect how we move through the world.

From a geopolitical perspective, the world is very interconnected. In general, we may reexamine institutions and ripple effects on three scales: the global scale, the national scale, and the local scale (Flint & Taylor, 2018). Each of these scales are interconnected; for example, something that happens on the local scale may have been influenced by global happenings (Flint & Taylor, 2018). Using these scales, we are reminded of the imposition of English as a lingua franca as a result of imperialism and colonialism globally. Local usage is influenced by the need to communicate for daily needs, as well as maneuverability within the economic sphere. While the spread of English has been hegemonic and oppressive, globalization in a postcolonial world opens
doors when English is utilized, leading to better opportunities from the expanding circle (countries that do not occupy socioeconomic status on a world scale) to the inner circle (countries that do).

Therefore, status and identity are tied to language on many scales. Canagarajah and Ben-Said (2011) state that “…English is equated with prestige, while failure to use English or even using other languages may connote lack of status” (p. 393). This ideology paves the way for emphasis on native speakers (Canagarajah & Ben-Said, 2011; Solano-Campos, 2014) and aspirations to attain native-like quality, despite the fact that there may be different variants in each language. Undoubtedly, given prominent autoethnographies in the field (Canagarajah, 2012; Solano-Campos, 2014), there is immense pressure for both L2 speakers and teachers to conform to certain expectations or standards; yet, communities of practice do not always line up with what is presented in textbooks (Canagarajah, 2012).

But as Canagarajah (2012) elaborates, “this top-down imposition of TESOL methods without a consideration of local pedagogical traditions has led to dysfunctional classroom conditions in many parts of the world” (p. 265). Needs that occur in one particular context may not always be crucial for another context and language changes to reflect that. As such, it is imperative that teachers also pivot their teaching to include different contexts that highlight the variety of language usages students may come across in different communities, as well as create an environment that challenges predominant assumptions about native speaker-ism. Native-speakerism is defined by Holliday (2006) as the belief that native speaker represents the ideal goal of learning and teaching a specific language. Below I explore several pitfalls of native-speakerism.

Throughout my teaching experiences, both in English and Chinese, I have had various interactions that solidify this cautionary message. I am more aware now of different language learning contexts and the dangers of native speaker-ism. Peers have sought my assistance as an editor because I am a “native speaker” of English, even though my grammar explanations may not cover all types of the particular usage they need to use. I have often had people tell me that I should talk with a Chinese accent because it is more “standard,” “widespread,” or “useful,” rather than my
home accent of Taiwanese Mandarin. These are all examples of native speaker preference. In order to counter such mistaken points of view, I find it imperative to highlight variations of language that students will find outside of a classroom. I let my students know many accents are valid and I help them understand pragmatics; for instance, I teach my students about different tones and ways of addressing another person that are not all covered in the textbook.

Highlighting different language usage and exploring these types of variations can thus have an impact on language learners and their identities. This results in students understanding what communities of practice (CoP) are and how they engage in particular spaces. Wenger (1998) describes communities of practice as groups of people that share a common purpose in engaging with each other. For L2 learners, the community of practice may encompass both the classroom and the intersection between the L1 culture(s) and the students’ own culture(s). As Benthuysen (2007) further explicates, “learning takes place when newcomers to a community have a legitimate reason or purpose for participation…they have an intention to enter the community” (pp. 120-121).

Stepping into the classroom and assuming the role of teacher means, again, helping to build bridges to another culture and assisting students in recognition of the circles they inhabit, ultimately fostering an L2 identity as a result of their interactions with other people and their environment. 

*Hidden Identities and an Inclusive Classroom*

Fostering L2 identities means understanding hidden identities and encouraging inclusion and a sense of belonging for all learners. As a person sitting at the intersection of disability, race, and gender, I acutely understand that how I present myself changes at any given moment depending on the environment. Hidden identities, according to Vandrick (1997), constitute any identities that students feel they must conceal (or reveal) due to stigma or perceived differences. These hidden identities can impact language learning, as the student might feel uncomfortable with certain topics and subsequently withdraw from the language learning environment. In my classroom, I remain mindful of different identities and hidden identities and empathetic toward the challenges students may face.
Creating a safe and inclusive classroom space that supports all identities—both hidden and intersectional—is therefore tantamount. All students must feel able to engage in the classroom environment, expressing themselves and tapping into their personal experience, and they do this best if they feel comfortable. Known affective strategies, such as creating a receptive group environment and connection between student-student groups/student-teacher groups, can be instrumental in making students feel like they can express themselves (Brouwer et al., 2019; Raghallaigh & Cunniffe, 2013). When students feel like they belong, or they feel kinship with the teacher based on the “approachability, flexibility, and respect of the teacher towards students” (Raghallaigh & Cunniffe, 2013, p. 120), they may be more likely to open up and make their voices heard.

In my own classroom, I have tried to foster this environment by: giving positive feedback, actively checking in with each student on their language goals and progress, and trying to help each individual with the aspects of the language they are struggling in. Having an open mind and empathetic demeanor and constantly monitoring the atmosphere of the classroom for how students may feel allows them to understand that the classroom is a place of learning. My students should not have to worry about whether they will face discrimination due to hidden identities. In addition, being open as a teacher and facilitator encourages diverse voices to be heard; this is because I try to help my students feel comfortable speaking up if a topic were to bother them because they know their concerns will fall on sympathetic ears. As such, my teaching philosophy also shares elements of pedagogies of care and inclusive pedagogies (Ortiz et. al, 2021; Walker & Gleaves, 2016), both of which recognize the importance of being responsive to different students’ needs and fostering relationships by recognizing students as individual learners.

Intercultural Communicative Competence and Global Citizenship

Because learning a language requires awareness of how language and people interact with each other globally and locally, I also focus on intercultural communicative competence in my classroom. Students should be exposed to a wide variety of experiences and ways of living as they
enter different communities of practice. This includes learning sociopragmatic aspects and “norms” of the target language. Over the course of teaching the second semester of first year Chinese, just for example, I have tried to introduce complex culturally specific aspects of face (or 面子) that students will encounter in the target language culture. I also provide authentic products of specific Taiwanese cultural events for students to experience. In these activities, learners are constructing new definitions and views of these cultural practices.

By triangulating products, perspectives, and practices within new experiences, students should be able to mitigate initial discomfort with the culture as something “foreign”—seeing and judging other events from an ethnocentric point of view—into one accepting of different cultures (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). This includes accepting that certain cultural practices vary from our own determination of right/wrong or what we practice. Once that happens, we can introduce learners and guide them around their own curiosity (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Being an English tutor required me to use various explanations for encountered situations that learners experienced; in turn, my students’ perspectives have definitely helped me see how preconceived notions of stereotypes may be effectively challenged through reflection, whether I am teaching English or Chinese. The American Councils of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) “World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages” recommends that learners make meaningful “cultural comparisons,” ultimately leading to increased intercultural competence, including a deeper understanding of other perspectives, and avoidance of stereotypes.

Circling back to my own experiences and keeping in mind privilege, access, identity, and inclusivity in language learning, as a teacher I now believe that the purpose of language is not just for communication, but also connection. As humans, we all share similarities and curiosity about other people that extends towards wanting to engage with another language and culture. But we don’t exist in a vacuum. Being conscious of where we are in the world and how that provides us access to certain resources can lead to more openness about different cultures and customs, which is a part of intercultural communicative competence. Second language teachers often lead students in
realizing this, which means making sure that we facilitate a space in which all learners may express their identities and feel secure enough to go outside their comfort zone. And when learners do this, that’s where language learning and becoming a global citizen begins.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

I came to the USU MSLT program after earning my bachelor’s degree in International Studies and Chinese, with absolutely no teaching experience except for what I did as an informal English tutor and a two-week program in Chinese for a research grant. My only frame of reference was what I saw during my time as a student, but I never had the terminology or theoretical background in pedagogy that I needed in order to understand what was happening in the classroom. Over the course of the MSLT program, I have learned valuable insights into teaching philosophies and methodologies that have helped me deepen my understanding of the teaching process. Below I offer a synthesis of classroom observations conducted while in the program.

Understandably, knowing my own lack of experience, I have treated my initial observations with great care—with the intent to learn as much as I could, both to prepare myself to become a teacher and to prepare for the students that I was about to meet. Because of this, I varied my classroom observations amongst a variety of languages and different levels. I attended a Chinese 2010 second-year class (in order to see where my students would be heading after the Chinese 1020 class I taught and what they needed to learn), as well as a Chinese 1010 class (to see what level students were currently at). In addition to these observations, I also observed a Spanish 1010 class, a French 1010 class, an Arabic 1010 class, and an Intensive English Language Institute 2740 Cross-Cultural Perspectives class. All of the methods and approaches that I observed in other teachers, along with reflecting on my own teaching, were instrumental in bolstering my professional development.

In addition to reflecting on multiple classroom observations, I must elaborate on the greatest benefit of all. Having a co-teacher for the duration of my teaching practicum as a graduate instructor has greatly helped me as a model in understanding how to teach and engage in the classroom. I had a front row seat in observing the different methodologies that she utilized in order to make the classroom a much more effective learning environment. Seeing her interact with the students provided very clear examples of intercultural communicative competence. I learned as I
observed her often guiding students in cultural comparisons and towards awareness of the differences between their own culture and the L2.

Creating a Safe and Engaging Environment

I learned as much about students and learning environments as I did about teaching approaches in my observation. To begin with, lowering the affective filter and creating a safe environment where students feel free to be themselves—including those who have hidden identities—and fully immerse themselves in the language is something I learned observing other classes. I noted that, in all of the novice level courses observed, a student who tries, who is not afraid to ask questions, and knows that the teacher will encourage them with positive feedback is more likely to participate than one who feels hindered by negative feedback or lack of knowledge.

Over the course of my observations, all of the teachers that I observed created a safe environment in their own way. Rapport with students—and building trust—is perhaps the most effective way of diminishing the affective filter. Furthermore, the Chinese teachers I observed made sure to connect learning to prior student experiences and to include gameplay, both of which kept students engaged and gave teachers a way to be relatable and approachable. Connecting to prior experience and engaging students through play are now vital in my classroom as well. Being keenly aware of how students are responding to the energy that I as a teacher put out (and explicitly stating that making some mistakes is okay in my classroom) has been key to building good relationships between myself and the students.

The beginning Spanish 1010 class that I observed also used rapport to build a safe environment and lower the affective filter for many students. On another note, this lesson included language use outside of the norm and humor, both of which appeared to help lower the affective filter and foster engagement. Introducing new and novel topics that students can discuss and debate through game play retains their attention and makes it easier to build a community. In one lesson, I saw that the teacher encouraged learners using “I would rather” questions and then had students decode a riddle in Spanish; consequently, this increased interaction between peers and the humor of
a riddle made it a fun environment. This type of joking was then used in scaffolding to help students understand more complicated Spanish grammar points related to places and locations. After the riddle and joking, they were able to comprehend what we were talking about, negotiating meaning using known vocabulary and concrete ideas instead of just relying on lists of abstract ideas from the book. Similarly, in my own classroom, I now utilize game apps like Kahoot! and humor through inside jokes (such as joking about socks and ducks, words that rhyme in Chinese) to create that sort of playful yet meaningful interaction.

Finally, in the Arabic 1010 class, encouragement and positive feedback always came first. After every sentence the students produced, the teacher was always enthusiastic and offered praise for what they said and what was correct and accurate in it. Looking at this teacher made me evaluate my own teaching and how I might offer positive feedback more often. After the observation, I saw myself increasing this particular aspect of my teaching, which resulted in a better, more comfortable environment for my students through positive reinforcement.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural communicative competence revolves around understanding that language is intimately tied together with culture, and that, despite the global nature of the world we live in today, how that language is used to protract differences. The Chinese classes that I observed often used this effectively and in a very clear way—several instances occurred when the teacher explained the difference between [認識] and [知道], where the first one is used for knowing a person on a more personal level, rather than knowing about a thing or a person. They also addressed pragmatics explicitly when appropriate. For instance, they discussed differences in apology, with saying I’m sorry [對不起] and how it meant something very serious in Chinese, as opposed to other forms of apology that portrayed a lesser degree of remorse.

Similarly, since intercultural communicative competence also includes knowledge of how the language works and skills that help a speaker communicate, I feel that even basic grammar and simple pragmatics provide a base for learners to effectively communicate. For novice learners of
Chinese, many of whom come from a background of English, this means for example learning the difference in gendered forms for verbs and adjectives, in addition to being aware that they exist. The French and Arabic classes I observed explicitly pointed out gender agreement, with both teachers drawing attention to the grammar forms and their cultural and linguistic implications.

The English class also became a prime example in encouraging intercultural communicative competence. This course for ESL learners is titled, “Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Cross-Cultural Explorations.” Through class presentations I watched, students were not only practicing presentational skills, but also learning about their classmates’ cultures. They were also learning to be more open minded and accepting, as well as analyzing different aspects of religion, identity, and cultures associated with each presenter. Students were encouraged to make cultural comparisons and express their own identities, telling their own stories. Other students would respond with verbal and non-verbal cues and questions to show that they were listening. In my own novice-level Chinese class, the ways in which language was expounded on to mean certain things was tantamount to understanding culture and pragmatics. For example, utterances such as [到底], meaning “really?” in a more assertive tone, had to be elaborated on in the context of speaker-listener relationships, similar to what I observed in this ESL class. In each of the different language courses I visited, I learned what it means to bring intercultural communicative competence to the classroom, using explicit instruction to emphasize understanding between the culture(s) in which one was raised and the cultures about which one is learning in the L2 classroom.

Though intercultural communicative competence is taught through grammar and pieces of culture throughout the lessons I observed above, it is still important to reflect on how the myth of the native speaker permeates itself in second language teaching or how variations in the language occur. Save for a stray comment about the differences in accents found in Chinese or some very brief comments about multiculturalism and translanguaging that I observed, I have found that talking about the myth of the native speaker, linguistic imperialism, and privilege are topics that
tend to be overlooked in the novice L2 classroom. I try to address these issues further, when possible, in my own classroom.

Additionally, it is crucial to talk about both privilege and pragmatics related to privilege in a social context, as learners are moving throughout a globalized world today. To understand that certain situations necessitate certain ways of being an interlocutor, and to realize that certain situations may be predicated on where you exist in society, are part of learning a language. One thing is certain from observing these classes: we live in a globalized society and are teaching global languages. It is therefore necessary to supplement scripted textbook dialogue with authentic language and interactions in real world settings. In doing so, we may better help our students understand, for instance, how speech acts and assumptions can lead to a misunderstanding or unsuccessful interaction (and address that some have the privilege to walk away from that interaction none the wiser).

The gaps I observe in teaching and learning motivate me to find ways to include more pragmatics and more discussion of identity and privilege within my teaching, and to pass it on to others. Doing this, I believe, will enrich students’ learning, providing them with a greater understanding of the world around them. It offers students the benefit of utilizing a language to gain communicative skills that bring people together, rather than pushing people apart.

Through these and other teaching observations over the course of the MSLT program, I have expanded my knowledge of methodologies, broadened my perspectives, as well as uncovered gaps that can potentially be addressed in my future professional development in teaching and advocacy.
Being the daughter of a non-native English speaker and a person who has been on the other end of interactions that value native speakers more than non-native speakers, the issues that I explore within this paper are very personal to me and relevant to my students. From my educational background in the field of International Studies, to personal experiences in seeing the way that access and resources may be influenced by stereotypical ideas about language, the topics of linguistic imperialism and increasing access and inclusion in the classroom remain compelling in my pedagogy and inform my teaching philosophy.

As such, I focus here on the most dominant global language, English, and the implications of teaching it as a foreign language, second language, or new language. First, I examine the history of how English became a lingua franca in the 19th and 20th centuries and the subsequent impact of that change on how current teaching uploads constructed norms about native speakers. Evaluating these common perceptions allows us to challenge outdated concepts and examine how English varies in World English usage. Reconsideration of these beliefs and a defined foundation of student-centered learning can lead us to invent better methods for teaching language, which I believe can be done by integrating pedagogies of care and creating inclusive classrooms through communities of practice, with a focus on multiliteracies as transformative practice.

While more languages like Spanish and Chinese have increased their presence on the global stage, English as a global language has endured for the past two and a half centuries, in which it has exerted considerable influence through a combination of soft power (ideology regarding the importance of English) and tangible evidence of interconnected global relations through imperialism and capitalism (such as market goods) that extend into this day (Flint & Taylor, 2018). Global flows, defined by Flint and Taylor (2018) as a movement of goods and services, also include the movement of people from different push and pull factors that include work, immigration, and
war. Subsequently, these flows have also created a diverse array of Englishes that are used in specific communities of practice that are different from “standardized” English. The oppressive official hegemony of “the King’s English” has been reduced globally; however, linguicism and glotophobia unfortunately persist, as language and accent can be the basis for discrimination against individuals or the exclusion of entire communities. We must pay continuous attention in an effort to adapt pedagogy to current language needs and create new pathways that encourage acceptance.

In conducting a review of the existing literature, I have learned that many commonly held stereotypes regarding the native speaker myth tend to uphold linguistic imperialism by viewing certain visages, accents, or pronunciation as “other” (Holliday, 2006). When attempts at dismantling these stereotypes are made, however, there is often uncertainty as to how to go about it or even if students and teachers around the world want to be inclusive of non-standard Englishes in their classrooms. Numerous approaches to teaching ESL/EFL or second languages are still geared towards obtaining native-like fluency as a goal in all aspects of language learning. Through this process of othering, many language learners are pushed towards conforming to an “ideal” that does not exist, and has repercussions such as discrimination or lack of access for those who cannot acquire this “ideal.” It is important for language teachers to be aware that:

In our society, language is a powerful and unrecognized instrument of domination and discrimination. Imposing your language as the only acceptable, respectable or reasonable one, and belittling, disqualifying or rejecting another person for their way of speaking, their accent or their vocabulary is as illegitimate as rejecting them for their religion, the colour of their skin or their sexual orientation… (Blanchet 2016, p. 1).

Many language learners are dependent on learning English in a way that may not suit their specific needs, as well as being negatively affected by structural or systemic inequality that favors a more Western ideal. Classrooms that strictly follow the model of the native speaker disregards the diversity and experiences that language learners bring and need to survive and thrive in an English as a L2 environment. Doing so ignores the vast landscape of language learning, encompassing
speakers of many native languages, all with different motivations ranging from the extrinsic to the intrinsic.

The world getting bigger and more connected means that English language teaching should adapt to new teaching methods and ideologies, just as other teaching in other languages have done. Teachers of second languages and ESL teachers have much to learn from one another. As teachers, we must demonstrate that the predominant idea of obtaining “native-speaker fluency” is no longer valid; as communication has changed, so has the linguistic make-up of different communities around the world. History, media, the internet, and travel have all contributed to this, of course. Keeping a stagnant image of what a specific speaker looks like is detrimental to both language learners and teachers. Instead, focusing on communication and community ensures that no matter where a speaker goes or who they encounter, they will always have the tools and language skills they need. Being aware of the impact these standards have on learners is a prerequisite for teachers interacting daily with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students in creating an environment where they can flourish. As we teach grammar and vocabulary, we may also address unhelpful stereotypes that block students from engaging in communities of practice.

Impact of English as a Global Language

English as a global language has had a long history on the global stage. Britain and the United States’ hegemonies through colonialism and industrial power (Gil, 2022) have impacted language use for at least two hundred and fifty years, spanning from Britain colonizing African and South Asian land to the United States taking the reins after the end of World War II. Kachru (1985) further expands on this in the “Three Circles Model,” in which he delineates the spread of English and how it’s used through three different circles—the inner circle (where countries’ native language is English and norms are created), the outer circle (which acquired English through colonization and uses it in the public sphere), and the expanding circle (which learns English as a foreign language). This proliferation of cultural influence from these inner circle countries to the expanding circle
creates an incentive for knowing how to speak English and environments where it provides rewards for those who utilize it “correctly” and penalizes those who use it differently. The conception of English, then, as access, or as an entrance to different social and political levels makes it invaluable as an advancement tool, even in the expanding circle.

Extrapolating the importance of English on a global level has never been more clear; as Gil (2022) points out, the sheer number of countries who prioritize English as a second or foreign language is around 92 percent, whether that be in the outer circle—a similar term to periphery—where English is used as a lingua franca in public domains to places where it exists as a foreign language for international trade. Additionally, because it can be used for a variety of different purposes, variation and degree of fluency is subsequently determined by what learners need.

However, despite the range of ways in which English has evolved with different usages, it does not negate the historical legacy of English as an imperialistic tool and the stereotypes which persist today. Enduring theories about native speakers and the racialization that occurs when determining who can gain access to certain infrastructure or better qualified positions cements structural inequality and promotes practices that continue to be detrimental to breaking down barriers or crossing borders. Any attempt at deconstruction requires that teachers look at their curriculum and approaches through a linguistic imperialist lens.

Linguistic imperialism is defined as a structural ideology that favors a certain, standardized way of speaking. Phillipson (2013) defines it further, referencing his own 2009 work in stating, “in essence, it is about exploitation, injustice, inequality, and hierarchy that privileges those able to use the dominant language” (p. 1) and that:

It is a form of linguicism, a favoring of one language over others in ways that parallel societal structuring through racism, sexism, and class: linguicism serves to privilege users of the standard forms of the dominant language, which represents convertible linguistic capital (p.1).
Linguicism is thus about privilege and capital and is another challenge that learners face.

Speakers who obtain a “native accent” and perform to certain perceived standards are given many affordances, though they might not even use that type of English in their own communities (Canagarajah, 2012). The above statement is supported by popular linguistic ideas that the “spread of English is considered to be natural, neutral and beneficial” (Pennycook, 2017, p. 9). Moreover, because English is so widely regarded as necessary for employment now, it has seemingly become the preferred medium of communication and provides so many benefits for its speakers that the historical reasons for its impact can be ignored (Pennycook, 2017). English has therefore been declared lingua nullius, the assumption that it is a language that has no political or economic ramifications tied to it, since it is for everyone (Phillipson, 2018), though Phillipson rightfully points out that “the discourse of English being ‘owned’ by all who use it ignores the inequalities that are generated by and through English” (Phillipson, 2018, p. 283). This shows that English is not free of inequality.

The concept of lingua nullius does not always play out in the inequities of the language teaching landscape today, where I have personally seen my Asian friends well-versed in professional English being passed over in favor of me or other speakers who supposedly seemed “more native” because of perception bias, despite not having sufficient qualifications. As a result, the unconscious prejudices that exist through linguistic imperialism are reinforced and the native speaker myth reified simply by an assumption such as this.

Native Speaker Myth

Myths about the native speaker and obtaining native speaker status are still prevalent within language learning. Preference for White or White-passing teachers reflects a certain standard of fluency and native-ness that adversely affects both language teachers and learners in many countries and communities. These notions about what constitutes a “native” speaker are embodied within a deeper relationship between race and authority; as Bonfiglio (2010) explicates, “such ethnolinguistic prejudice continually lurks behind…”[wording] employed to describe the authority of
the speaker who acquired the language…as [their] first language” (p.1). Such internalized prejudices can be found within multiple articles surrounding native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), as well as teachers of color (Aneja, 2016; Gras, 2022; Motha, 2014; Solano-Campos, 2014). Thus linguicism and racism are both behind inequity among teachers and learners alike.

Aneja’s (2016) study, with interviews with four pre-service teachers, also illustrates this point; the participants, while coming from different backgrounds not necessarily within the binary of NEST/NNESTs, still referenced their own language skills as less-than because of racialized othering and preconceived biases. Negotiating authority as a language teacher thus depends on perceived authenticity. In turn, this affects the classroom in two different ways. First, “standard English” is continually presented as a criterion to reach fluency and respectability. Motha (2014) outlines this phenomenon where despite “standard English occur[ring] only in the hypothetical, it is understood and constructed as an objective fact in everyday interactions, the popular media, academia and schools” (p. 112). Secondly, NNEST experiences (especially those that are visibly non-white) are devalued because popular opinion focuses on a Western experience and locales such as the United States or the United Kingdom. Classroom materials displaying predominately White faces and Western materials certainly play a part in this, as it only provides one narrow point of view from a large number of speakers, furthering the assumption of racialized standards of English.

As such, “teachers who speak mainstream English—a variety that is silently but enduringly coupled with Whiteness—are perceived to be more legitimate than speakers of English that [are] not mainstream” (Motha, 2014, p. 115). Evidence of this is found in research and autoethnographies done by second language teachers. Gras (2022) emphasizes a finding where teachers of color were often challenged on the legitimacy of their expertise, “creat[ing] feelings of inadequacy and issues with self-efficacy both on individual and professional levels” (p.8). Race being tied to native speaker-ism then means that any encounters with something or someone outside of the norm has an “otherizing” effect, where students and teachers have to negotiate identity dependent on context
As stated above in my teaching philosophy statement, it is important for L2 and ESL teachers to be mindful of identity and hidden identities in the classroom.

Thus, understanding nonnative-ness as something that is bestowed upon a person (whether that be a learner or a teacher) is crucial to broadening students’ perspectives, worldviews, and allowing them to create their own international identities. Otherwise, it ignores the practicality of lived experiences and makes it harder to feel a sense of belonging in another community (Gras, 2022; Solano-Campos, 2014). If we are not careful about these inequities, classroom instruction becomes focused on perfection rather than communication, perpetuating the stereotypes that all speakers of English must use the language in a specific way for it to be legitimate (Aneja, 2016), stymieing intercultural communicative competence and acceptance of different cultural practices.

Aneja (2016) further explains the performativity of language that may occur in class and carry over to life outside of class: “every iteration of (non)native speaking performatively creates in the social imagination mental-cultural images…which will be invoked in future interactions” (p. 591). Because the teacher provides insight into the target culture and facilitates discussion of different experiences to lead students in creating their own international identities, resisting stereotypical notions and creating environments of exploration on race and communities based on personal lived experiences creates a classroom of acceptance. Therefore, by deconstructing the native speaker myth and providing exposure to multiple examples of authentic language usage through diverse accents, vocabulary, and pronunciation, teachers enable both themselves and their students to look at the world in a new way, embracing differences rather than shunning them.

World Englishes and Common Perceptions

Key to providing this new worldview is recognition of world Englishes, which can be defined as localized variations of English used by different communities across the world. The range produced by these speakers is infinite and encompasses an array of experiences that they may encounter—whether that be for language for specific purposes or simply in line with the communities that speakers occupy. Regardless of the initial motivation, exposure to numerous
Englishes can help with developing sensitivity and fostering understanding, rather than focusing on standards. Bolton (2003) was one of the first to explore Chinese speaker Englishes and recognize the importance of studying them.

Motha (2014) also draws attention to this by referencing provincialization, or “promoting an awareness of the ways in which…different varieties carry meanings and why” (p. 127). The author goes on to reference a specific instance of categorizing an African American Vernacular English (AAVE) word as simply popular, rather than as slang, because “slang” often carries an “inferior” meaning (Motha, 2014). In this way, negative connotations regarding nonstandard English or dialects is belayed and the usage is still legitimized. Crucial to this process is the teacher themselves modeling usage and exposing students to comprehensible input from many different authentic sources; again, as the authority within the classroom, teachers are the reference from which students draw from.

As Li (2017) notes, “affirming language varieties that students bring to the classroom [and] exposing students to other dialects through carefully selected materials and designed activities” (p. 264) simultaneously bolsters reflection of how a learner fits into the English linguascape and engenders appreciation for the “other.” But implementing a focus on nonstandard Englishes isn’t easy; as much as these ideals focus on deconstructing hegemony and the native speaker fallacy, dominant ideology doesn’t dissipate in a day. Motha (2014) elaborates on this phenomenon as contrasting forces; one draws learners toward assimilation and conformity in using standard English, and the other as a force that encourages language diversity. A complete dedication to rejecting either force simultaneously disadvantages students whose realities are a mixture of both (Motha, 2014). We can certainly see this type of thinking in case studies, whose participants in multiple ethnic groups have differing opinions on whether the focus of teaching English should reject a “native accent” and pronunciation that follows American or British standards. It is helpful to turn to learners’ perspectives from around the globe.
From learners’ perspectives in Iran and India, for instance, Monfared and Safarzadeh (2014) asked participants what their attitudes and expectations were towards obtaining a native speaker accent. Iranian participants were more focused on obtaining native-like proficiency and pronunciation than Indian students. 56 out of the 60 Iranian participants “would [have] like[d] to speak English with a native-speaker based accent” (Monfared & Safarzadeh, 2014, p. 216), stating reasons for the American or British accents being more beautiful and correct. This extends to seeing pronunciation corrected, with “native pronunciation (especially [the] American accent) more favored as a norm for learning” (Monfared & Safarzadeh, 2014, p. 219), in contrast to most of the Indian speakers, who would rather keep their own native accents and state that communication should be the primary goal. Even with the differences in attitude toward accent and pronunciation, however, both Iranian and Indian participants agreed that the native speaker model should be kept intact.

Similarly, Kang and Ahn (2019) interviewed Korean participants on current beliefs about English and whether explicit instruction in intercultural communication affected them. Although an element of the study focused on speech and fluency, the general perception regarding accents is what I highlight here, especially learner attitudes towards the type of accent they aspire to. Initial assessment found that around 75% of the 120 participants veered towards American or British varieties as preferable and even after instruction regarding different Englishes, 50% “still listed [the same] varieties as their learning goals” (Kang & Ahn, 2019). Despite the authors referencing a “substantial increase” in acceptance towards learning nonstandard varieties, this study also illustrates that the norm is still “western” English.

Additionally, learner inclination for teachers speaking standard English in the classroom is by far the typical preference. Tsang (2019) interviewed 97 students about different L1 and L2 accents (ranging from accents in the inner circle to accents in the outer circle) with six different variables: attention, favorability, model for learning, native-ness, suitability as an English language teacher, and comprehensibility. Students generally paid more attention and favored standard accents
such as British/American accents or accents considered “close” to the standard (such as Canadian and South African) in comparison to Australian/New Zealand, Scottish, Chinese, Indian, and Hong Kong accents. They also believed that these prior four accents were the most suitable for English language teachers, which could potentially reflect negatively on student perceptions of teacher identity, or teacher proficiency and authority in the classroom.

This shows that students may be non-receptive to non-native English teachers and non-standard accents, which limits their exposure to different Englishes and stagnates their intercultural communicative competence. Further interviews with some of the participants brought up salient points connected to the above statement. Interviewees stated that accents led to communication breakdown and “made the lessons difficult to follow or even pointless to listen to” (Tsang, 2019, p. 150), even finding it hard to give non-native and non-standard-accented English teachers respect. This type of viewpoint is further explored in another of Tsang’s recent studies in 2020, where the author specifically asked about views regarding teacher accents and incorporating non-standard accents in the classroom.

Conducting a study with 1,425 participants, Tsang (2020) found that while participants were not as adamantly for adherence to standard accents, there was a “significant and substantial correlation between…participants who were in favo[r] of teachers speaking with [standard accents] who themselves wanted to acquire [standard accents]” (Tsang, 2020, p. 9). Furthermore, students in this study had slightly negative outlooks on incorporating non-standard accents in the classroom. But do teachers around the world see it the same way?

Even through a teacher’s lens, predominant patterns still reflect teaching standard English varieties. Khatib and Monfared (2017) investigated teachers’ stances toward English varieties across the inner, outer and expanding circle. Though 72% of the 325 participants “believed that as long as communication is not adversely affected, [teachers] shouldn’t insist on native-like communication” (Khatib & Monfared, 2017, p. 224), teachers in the periphery and expanding circle favored American or British pronunciation, with about a quarter (27.30%) who insisted on the
pronunciation within classrooms themselves. Contrasted with native speakers of English in the inner circle, who favored mutual intelligibility over norm-based standards, the preferences of English teachers in the expanding and peripheral countries still adhere to western varieties being the best to produce. We can see, then, that challenging native speakerism is not as clear-cut as simply understanding the inequities it entails then calling it into question in our classrooms. Fully discarding it remains a goal for the future, then, but doing so cannot fully account for the outside political, economic, and social forces that control movement and access in the world right now.

In Hong Kong, similar attitudes from pre- and in-service teachers reflect the same beliefs. Tsang (2021) interviewed 166 teachers about their attitudes regarding accents and whether they believed they should incorporate non-standard accents into their teaching. While the teachers didn’t discriminate against non-standard accents, and generally showed a neutral attitude towards standard American and British ones, they weren’t necessarily advocating for including non-standard variations. Approximately “35.2% and 31.6% of the teachers [even] indicated that they would not incorporate non-standard L1 or any L2 accents respectively into their teaching” (Tsang, 2021, p. 11). Going even further, the author asked questions about whether teachers knew which accents to include in the classroom. Thirty percent of the participants again didn’t know which ones were applicable. This shows that despite a shift towards inclusivity, there remains uncertainty about practical implementation in schools.

The discussion above and such types of varied thinking signal that the forces surrounding conformity to standard English are very prevalent. Learners still have to move through a world that privileges stereotypical Western accents. While an increasing number of students and teachers are receptive to World Englishes and accents in the classroom, progress is slow. As Tsang (2020) states, “more work has to be done to explain to the learners the rationale behind and the benefits of incorporating these non-[standard] accents into their English learning” (Tsang, 2020, p. 9). Therefore, we must continue to ask the question, if implementing a norm where non-standard
accents and deterritorialization are advocated, how then can we create an equitable and inclusive environment where that ideology can grow?

*Evolving Identities and Pedagogies of Care*

One way that we can achieve this resistance against linguicism is through pedagogies of care and inclusivity. Understanding the dynamics of the classroom and providing space where students can thrive with different identities and abilities are fundamental to supporting all lifelong language learners. Ortiz et. al (2021) define care pedagogy as “a teaching philosophy and practice grounded in a deep and holistic care for students” (p. 24). This can manifest in different types of ways—ranging from connecting with students on a personal level to academic support. Walker and Gleaves (2016) expound on this with a theoretical framework that puts a relationship at the center of all teaching. Through this relationship, different pedagogical narratives emerge such as caring as resistance.

As teachers of English, it is vital to understand the power which this language has in all walks of life around the world; being a global language, it means that students navigate situations where they negotiate their own identity as language learners through accents, new experiences and interactions with other people. Stepping into communities of practice also requires using particular language and cultural cues appropriate for students’ circumstances, blending both the known and the unknown. For me, this can be seen in a local context with USU’s Intensive English Language Institute—which caters to university students—or the English Language Center of Cache Valley that offers classes for immigrants, refugees, and ESL learners from multiple countries in basic life skills and citizenship endeavors. To apply it to the care pedagogy outlined above, then, understanding these power dynamics is an act of caring as resistance in our teaching.

Caring as resistance is thus seen as “a mechanism in which caring individuals positio[n] themselves as buttresses against what [is] perceived as the steady infiltration of interpersonal values with operationalized processes from externally imposed values” (Walker & Gleaves, 2016, p. 74). In the context of EFL/ESL learners, resistance includes constructing a classroom that responds to
communities of practice and introduces learners to non-standard Englishes and accents, as well as looking inward to teacher awareness. Cultivating responsive strategies and processes that assist individual students (such as learning styles, hidden identities, and life experiences) can all be part of creating an accessible classroom (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). Further looking at Motta and Bennett (2018), we can also recognize care as specific approaches; more specifically in regard to recognition and dialogic practices that create authenticity.

Implementing these types of approaches has two major impacts. First, teachers can engage in self-reflection about their teaching practices and incorporate more culturally diverse artifacts. Li (2017) presents an approach that encourages teachers to develop awareness. In exploring their own backgrounds through ethnoautobiographies, teachers are able to examine their biases and build appreciation for their own culture. Then, by examining a non-standard English, it broadens their viewpoint on translanguaging techniques that facilitate recognition and acceptance of multiple English varieties. From there, this reflection is put into practice by way of teacher modeling; as such, teachers are able to show students how the language is used and still facilitate the role of the teacher by providing access to the L2.

Secondly, it creates an understanding on both the student and the teacher’s parts that when students step into a language classroom, they are negotiating the space that they occupy. The student is not a passive receptacle; instead, they are a language user, connecting their L1 and their L2 through translanguaging. As such, the classroom environment becomes one of transformation—introducing predominant ideologies about the language and new interactions with the L2 culture. Students may develop a shifting sense of identity and “an awareness that they [are], on occasion, ‘performing’ as a different person for a different audience” (Bond, 2019, p. 658), that occur on international and individual levels, though that isn’t always a bad thing.

Acquiring this knowledge results in a realization that, depending on the context, they engage in cross-cultural communication separate from their expected norms. In certain contexts, they can be the minority, and in others, the majority. Since students will inherently interact with a variety of
people across different contexts, the shift should be on “English as a communicative medium that serves all users regardless of their first language” (Berns, 2020, p. 681). This way, it is thus an acknowledgement that ESL/EFL learners are not a monolithic group stuck in one place. Learners enter and exit different contexts with different reasons for using the varieties they do. Berns (2020) concludes that because of this, there’s no one unified way of approaching idealized communicative competence. By facilitating a classroom of care as resistance and acknowledging that there are different levels of intelligibility in different situations, teachers enable students to think critically about certain standards and what that might mean for them individually. Therefore, students coming to understand that each interaction is “complex and oscillating, as moving through linguistic, cultural, structural and knowledge-based…transforming spaces” (Bond, 2019, p. 662) may be unsettling, but it dismantles core beliefs about native speaker-ism and allows for individual expression.

Subsequently, it could be viewed as a liberation or as a failure. Since the widespread ideal is obtaining a native speaker’s fluency and accent, not achieving that (in terms of “proper”-ness, accent, or moving up in social stratification) is looked down upon. Yet, through Motta and Bennett’s (2018) definition of care as recognition that acknowledges students as having existing, complex experiences, language teachers can “foster dialogical co-creation of knowledges” (p. 636) that introduce new perspectives on localizing English and diversity within the English-speaking community.

Allowing for a reconstruction of what is considered “standard” ultimately “serves to foster re-narrativizations of self which nurture critical reflexivity and the unsettling of hegemonic narratives of success and failure” (Motta & Bennett, 2016, p. 636). Consequently, students are able to practice language that reflects their personal, lived experiences in their own communities. Rather than adhere solely to the native speaker myth and perpetuate stereotypes about English as a global language, contextualizing the language within relevant situations to learners gives them the ability to blend ideologies together in a way that serves them best, creating a new L2 identity.
Another important part in creating an environment that prioritizes students’ lived experiences and deterritorializes English is creating communities of practice. Communities of practice (CoP) are traditionally defined as a group of people working towards a common goal. Although CoPs are usually referenced within the confines of social work, we can take that meaning and expound upon it in terms of language learning. Haneda (1997) defines it as:

A shift away from the notion of learning as the simple acquisition of knowledge in isolation to the idea of learning as a mode of participation in the social world; and a shift away from the traditional focus on individual learners to an emphasis on their shared membership in the community. (p. 14)

Simultaneously highlighting and creating these communities of practice can be instrumental in fostering these new student identities as part of different circles, rather than a mirror image of what popular conceptions they are supposed to mold themselves into (such as obtaining native speaker fluency). Tajeddin et. al (2021) found that CoP, whether real or envisioned, connects students and allows them to act in a more globalized manner. Incorporating different English varieties and accents introduces students to wider communities of practice—that is, one that allows them to “pursu[e] global citizenship and communication with the whole world, not integration with American or English native speakers exclusively” (Tajeddin et. al, 2021, p. 12), with an emphasis on the communities they occupy.

One added benefit to this is seen directly in the classroom itself; since EFL/ESL students come from various backgrounds and language levels, it’s a community of practice in its own right. Students bring their own motivation, attitudes, and prior experience that can then be translated to the co-creation of knowledge referenced by Motta and Bennett (2018) above by interacting with fellow non-native speakers and teachers as a guide. Similar experiences were given earlier by Haneda (1997), in which students were able to engage
with their peers of different language levels in constructing meaning through collaboration on a student project. The teacher may facilitate these bonds or sense of belonging to some extent; again, as the teacher brings in that awareness of specific usages within different communities, students are actively participating in widening their worldviews and the ACTFL standards 5 C’s regarding connection, comparisons, and communities specifically (ACTFL).

Besides negating the weight of standard English as the norm, being conscious of imagined and existing communities illustrates that learning is situated within context. ESL/EFL learners use specific languages for specific purposes. Tsang (2019) refers to a recontextualization of learning objectives and lesson content with a needs analysis. Situating language learning in pertinent contexts means that students are going to be learning what they need in their specific communities of practice; they will be working toward their individual or community language goals. Once teachers understand their classroom and can foster an environment in which all are comfortable with some level of change, they are able to guide students in transforming their language abilities into something that is unique to them. In turn, those abilities allow them to consider cultural pragmatics, communicative competence, and a broader worldview.

*Incorporating a Multiliteracies Approach*

After looking at pedagogies of care and communities of practice, the final approach I bring up in regard to creating an environment that encourages a diverse worldview is embedded within the multiliteracies framework. Although this paper has mainly centered on native speakerism (implying a centering of speech), ESL/EFL education also incorporates writing and reading into these contexts. Such things like grammar mistakes and English usage that does not match native speaker standards are ways in which native speakerism also affects language learners. That said, I believe that the multiliteracies approach can encompass all facets of language learning as it relates authenticity, identity, and transformative designs.
Coined by the New London group in the mid 1990s, the multiliteracies framework originally set out to be more inclusive of not only cultural diversity but also linguistic and technological diversity. In general, the multiliteracies framework includes a wide range of multimodal forms and genres by emphasizing Available Designs and specific contexts that affect language use (Maia, 2020). Specific steps delineated within the framework align with what I have laid out here in terms of constructing new meaning and usage to support diverse individual students. These steps include: 1) meaning design 2) interpretation and 3) transformation. Paesani (2016) elaborates on multiliteracies as “allow[ing] learners to become critical users of language, to recognize how language is used in various sociocultural contexts, [and] to understand the dynamic and evolving nature of language use” (p. 271). Below, I expand on how this aspect of the multiliteracies framework fits into ESL/EFL teaching.

As already established in this paper, ESL/EFL learners come from various backgrounds and bring multiple experiences to the table of language learning. According to Paesani (2016), meaning design in the multiliteracies framework requires looking at the specific differences within language such as conventions and style while connecting prior cultural knowledge to what is currently being taught. This outlook can be combined with interpretation, given that each student will have various perceptions on what they learn. Thus, implementing discussion of different world Englishes and centering experiences of the students through care as resistance, allows students to take different authentic texts and materials and relate them back to their own experience or the community they inhabit. In the classroom, for example, this means that I begin a lesson by connecting students’ past experiences or language goals with the themes of a text or invite them to link their own prior knowledge with the authentic text or image being presented in the classroom.

Doing this creates connections that are longer lasting and more relevant to the learner. This is especially true in regard to genre, as ESL/EFL learner contexts often vary; one learner might need English for employment, another for an academic class, and another for interacting in a community where they have migrated. Understanding different usages is wholly beneficial when teachers arrive
at situated practice, which the New London Group (1996) defines as “immersion in a community of learners engaged in authentic versions of such practice” (p. 84) and overt instruction. Grounding lessons in what learners need relates to their specific communities of practice and allows them to draw from authentic interactions they might face outside of the classroom.

It also connects to critical framing and transformation, which centers on critiquing what has been learned and “innovate on their own, within old communities and in new ones” (The New London Group, 1997, p. 87). Allowing students to reconcile new information with what they have previously learned fosters a new L2 identity not by rejecting their first language, but utilizing it in a way that learners can use in a multilingual environment. The multiliteracies framework is applicable and useful to my teaching philosophy, encouraging intercultural communicative competence as a result of looking at new information in a different way, interpreting and analyzing, connecting the known and the unknown, and applying specifically to their frame of reference. The language they learn is now transformed into something that they apply to their unique situation and application is an important part of language learning in this framework.

As such, the multiliteracies framework fits hand in hand with the two approaches—fostering communities of practice and implementing pedagogies of care as resistance. Each of the three approaches above works in tandem; communities of practice influence the way that learners interact with their L2. Pedagogies of care influence communities of practice by emphasizing the native speaker is not the sole speaker of English as an L2 that learners will come across, combating the stereotype that is an ideal that they need to obtain. And finally, the multiliteracies framework can be applied within the classroom to relate the language used back to the speaker themselves—to their experiences, identities, and goals—in a way where they can transform the language into something they will use as a global citizen.
STATEMENT OF FUTURE GOALS

This journey over the past two years has been life changing. When I entered this program, I had only a vague notion of what I wanted to do and not a clue how to do it. What I did know, however, was that I wanted to use the skills I learned in this graduate program to affect change. I learned skills and theories that combined both my bachelor’s in International Studies and what I have learned in Second Language Teaching. It seems silly to state that I want to make a change in the world, even if it is just in my immediate surroundings and community. But it’s true.

Going through this program has made me realize that I can do so in different ways. One of the things that I have always been acutely aware of is how English is typically taught in the Taiwanese classroom. It’s stiff, rote, and doesn’t do much outside of the classroom besides giving the learner a grade in the college entrance exams. Knowing what I know now about linguistic imperialism and knowing how that affects language learners has only empowered me to confront parts of it; in doing so, I realize that I cannot change the world, but I can give the next generation of learners tools to resist and dismantle the inequities in it.

Using approaches like multiliteracies or pedagogies of care and focusing on intercultural communicative competence, as well as applying practical techniques that I have learned in my MSLT classes, I hope to enable students in learning languages by creating an engaging classroom of access and inclusivity. These skills can be applied anywhere, though I hope to use them in Taiwanese English language classes or in English language learning centers working alongside refugees and immigrants. I want to continue in a language advocacy line of work—both in education and in language learning. One area I hope to use this in is language revitalization in Taiwanese Hokkien and other indigenous languages in Taiwan. Advocacy in this area represents an extension of diversity, equity, and inclusion that I value in my own classroom.

Yet, I know that learning (and teaching) should be a life-long commitment in progress. To this end, I have participated in conferences and will continue to do so as I research the most effective classroom methodologies. I will continue participating in professional development, from
online webinars to face-to-face conferences, which will allow me to grow as a teacher and learn more about language advocacy. I want to seek out opportunities that benefit both my students and me, honing my skills in the classroom and adding to my toolbox of different activities and methodologies.

Looking forward to the future, I know that I will take what I have learned into future jobs and educational pursuits—such as further studies in Austronesian studies and linguistics, then onwards to language advocacy efforts in Taiwan. Every time that I learn more about language diversity, it reinforces my belief that we should appreciate these languages and their breadth and depth of knowledge about the world and cultural beliefs. To be privy to that knowledge and open up different avenues for cross-cultural communication and appreciation has been a goal of mine ever since I learned what the MSLT program was from my mother.

Language is a door between cultures, a handshake between two strangers, and a bridge that unites us all. Facilitating that type of access is a privilege, and I will endeavor to always keep that in mind, no matter what I am doing—whether that be teaching or pursuing other fields related to language learning and linguistics.
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APPENDIX

Requests and Refusals in Chinese: An Exploration and Pragmatics Annotated Lesson Plans

Requesting in Chinese (會, 能, and 可以)

To offer an example of my approaches to teaching pragmatics in theory and practice, in the appendix below I include a brief, select literature review and two annotated sample lesson plans. This additional piece of my portfolio represents an investigation of teaching topics related to requesting and refusals in Chinese conducted at USU during Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan’s MSLT Second Language Pragmatics course and relates to the intercultural communicative competence themes outlined in my teaching philosophy. In general, pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies language use in its culture context, covering many aspects of communication, and ranging widely from requests and refusals, to invitations, to apologies and making excuses, to hand gestures and facial expressions, to what is implied by wording, and much more. Pragmatics are a key part of the negotiation of meaning in a communicative classroom. Teaching pragmatics, as in my two sample lesson plans provided below, often supports one of the ACTFL 5 C’s: Cultural Comparison.

In teaching any second language at any level, pragmatics is a vital part of communication and cultural competency. I aim to teach pragmatics both explicitly and not explicitly in my classroom and below I provide just a few examples of how I include pragmatics in my classes.

Requesting is a difficult thing to do in any language, requiring the speaker to navigate certain cultural norms and patterns to successfully interact with a person who speaks the target language in an inoffensive way. As a teacher of beginning Chinese and a language learner myself, I know how important this type of speech act is. In everyday life, we encounter multiple situations where we have to ask for help; if we do not know how to, then it drastically reduces the ability to function in the target language society.

This lesson plan is intended to dovetail with the college-level textbook Chinese Odyssey, Volume 1 (Wang 2007) that I have used for USU’s Chinese 1020 course, and is situated at the end of lesson 14, which is about a month into the second semester for beginner Chinese learners. For
these learners, they will have already learned 會 (the innate ability to do something), 能 (the learned ability to do something), and 可以 (permission to do something). These characters all translate roughly in English to “can,” or “to be able to,” and usage varies depending on the context of the conversation. However, second language learners tend to use the character relating to permission (可以) more often than native speakers (Wei & Jiang, 2019), which centers the speaker rather than the listener. These circumstances, alongside the usual production for second semester beginning Chinese students (that often tend to prefer shorter sentences with fossilized, simple grammar structures), provide the perfect base for initiating a conversation about pragmatically appropriate language and getting students to produce more output.

**Summation of Literature and Informed Lesson Plan Design**

As an intermediate learner of Chinese myself, I had more experience with requesting, but I still wanted to see whether I could find more information pertaining to this speech act to help my students better understand its function and cultural contexts. Meng and Reed (2020) bring up points regarding the complexity of the request. Though this article focused on Chinese EFL learners, the authors stipulate non-native speakers typically tend to use more formulaic expressions, even when situations change. Contrasting that to my own current classroom teaching, I can clearly see why we would need to expand our classroom activities (including role play, video chat, or other activities) to include the types of real-life situations they might encounter.

Similar to this, Liu et. al (2021) looked at how this type of pragmatics changed with learner age as a variable. Since my current learners are college aged, it is especially important that they be able to navigate groups with differing social statuses. This recent study found that, in general, the older generation tend to use imperatives, which act more like a demand, followed by thanking; in contrast, the younger generation used query preparatory speech acts (including the 可以/能 structure that my Chinese 1020 learners need to practice). Results in this study give me examples of ways to introduce different request structures and also provide context of who learners might encounter in real life. This way, if learners come across an older person who does not use the typical
American head acts (such as nodding or shaking the head) they would be able to understand, to make cultural comparisons, and to not wrongly perceive this as rude.

Yet, pragmatically appropriate and grammatically inappropriate sentences may also pop up that are not included in our teaching materials. As Li (2012) brings up, repeated practice of this type of structure aids in recognition of times when it might happen—and subsequently might help—students recognize how to go about reacting in a situation like this. Li supplies examples of different ways this can happen; and while this is not something I want to explicitly teach in the sample lesson plan provided below, it is a vital aspect that I want to bring up and perhaps engage students in understanding how it may occur in interactions they have with native speakers.

This type of awareness of how a request might be structured also comes up in Jia and Huang’s research. Jia and Huang (2008) indicate that Chinese requests tend to be the inverse of American ones. In this respect, the request is often put at the end of the sentence, rather than the beginning; additionally, the way that Chinese people introduce themselves into the conversation through preparation of asking if the hearer “had time” to start the motion of the request. Knowing this and showcasing how culture might affect speech patterns in understanding pragmatics. The sequence of facework + justification + request, rather than request + justification, can also aid in better realizing how to formulate a request in the target language.

At this point, the literature points to some solid examples of how a request might be implemented, as well as how culture can influence how a request is made. To put everything together, we now can turn to Hong’s research. Hong (1998) draws attention to the please (請) and tag words (好嗎) in Chinese. Since the word for please in Chinese can be used in various types of situations (not all of them pertaining to a translation of “please”), it tends to function as a perfunctory greeting. This is similar to how in American English often when one asks “how are you?”, it is rhetorical and not really asking how you are feeling. Thus, adding the tag word onto the end makes it more polite as a request.
Moving on, we can then further look into how 可以 and 能 are used in different situations. Wei and Jiang (2019) talk about how non-native speakers are more inclined to be direct with their requests and typically use 可以 more than 能, which centers the speaker rather than the hearer. While technically not grammatically incorrect, this type of fossilization and dependence on using a specific type of permission can lead to blunders when talking. Furthermore, the authors also talk about the addition of a tag word or hedged statements as a way to ask. This focus on indirectness is thus very informative for my lesson plan, in addition to the points talked about above.

The findings from these above articles inform my first sample lesson plan on requests, by introducing a sequence to rely on, cultural implications to teach, and more explicit examples regarding 可以 versus 能, as well as the addition of tag words like 好嗎 and the please word 請:

Lesson Plan – Requests

May 2, 2022

Target learners/proficiency: Chinese 1020/novice-high
Time spent: (1) 60-minute lesson + activity

Objectives:
- Students will be able to combine the please structure and the tag word 好嗎 when asking for something
- Students will be able to recognize the differences in requests between old and young learners
- Students will be able to request using a hearer-oriented approach (using 能 rather than 可以)

Materials:
- Powerpoint with visual aids
- Whiteboard and markers for students
- Audio file of pragmatically appropriate conversations re: requesting

Introduction to the Course Material/Warm-Up:
- Teacher will ask students different questions using 可以/能, 請, and 好嗎 in order to introduce them to the specific structures
  - Students should be at a language level where they would be able to understand each word individually, but the questions necessitate slow speech and TPR, indicating specific objects.
  - Examples of this include:
    - 請幫我把屏幕拉下來，好嗎? (Can you help me pull down the screen, please?)
    - 你們能不能給我你們的作業？(Can you give me your homework?)
    - 你可以幫我給你的同學們這張紙嗎？(Can you help me give your classmates this paper please?)
Teacher will ask students how they might say “can I borrow your textbook?” and “please help me fill this application out?”

Teacher will write student answers on the board.

Lesson Activities:

Teacher will explain briefly the learning objectives and that we are learning about requests today. Teacher will explain what students will be able to do and understand by the end of class.

Teacher will ask whole class which words students have learned for asking questions/interrogatives, as a warm up and review.

Teacher will respond to answers and write students’ answers on the board as well (or students could be given markers to write their question words on the board).

Teacher will explain the listening exercise and that she will let students listen to an audio of a person speaking a dialogue in conjunction with requesting.

Teacher will let the audio play once, running the whole thing through without a break. Teacher will then let students know they want to watch for ways that the person is requesting.

Teacher will adjust audio speed to .75 and let the audio run again, pausing at specific moments to let students notice when the person is requesting something.

Teacher will ask students to identify the sentence structure of what the person is saying by repeating it.

Teacher will write it on the board, asking students to look for differences. Teacher will circle the differences in “can” words and ask students why they thought the person was using the same/different structure than what the students in the classroom produced.

Teacher will pull up PPT and switch to talking in English. Teacher will then explain the differences for requests in Chinese.

Teacher will put sequence of request on the PPT, explaining that Chinese people tend to use facework + justification-request, rather than request-justification.

Teacher will explain that Chinese requests tend to be couched at the end and a preparatory statement such as asking if the hearer is free also counts as getting the hearer ready for your request.

Teacher will go over how imperatives such as 要 and 想要 (both want) are perfectly applicable in Chinese and may be used by the older generation.

Teacher will compare output of students’ answers on the board to sequences such as query preparatory statements for requests, giving feedback and having students practice the new queries together.

Teacher will explicate the difference between 可以 and 能, explaining that hearer-oriented statements are more common with native speakers.

Teacher will ask what 請 means and where it’s usually put in a sentence. Teacher will then explain that 請 is more polite with a tag question because it’s more rote.

Teacher will then ask students to get into small groups and restructure the sentences that they did on the board according to what they just learned.

Teacher will ask each group to explain what they did and conduct a discussion of why it might be more pragmatically appropriate this way.

Formative Assessment—
• In a role play activity, teacher will introduce a scenario of two roommates and a landlord (who will be played by the teacher). Students will have to ask the roommate to help move stuff and fetch certain items.
  o Students should be able to effectively use two (2) instances of hearer-oriented requests.
  o Students should be able to effectively use one (1) use of 請 + 好嗎.
  o Students should appropriately understand the generational difference by using the different terms that mark requests.

Refusals in Chinese

Refusing someone can be a gamble; as such, it involves facework and making sure that the other party isn’t offended. To further complicate matters, Chinese also has fake refusals where it’s not polite to accept a gift until the asker has insisted on it at least three times. For non-native learners (including me), it’s very hard to identify when a fake refusal happens and how to deliver a genuine refusal without blundering into a face-threatening act. Thus, learning how to navigate situations where a refusal might occur is tantamount in being culturally sensitive and pragmatically correct.

For the learners in Chinese 1020, the typical way to refuse is 對不起, which is quite serious but often used by non-native speakers (and especially those of a lower language status) in any particular situation. As such, they have been using this way of refusing for a semester, which has the potential of becoming a fossilized sentence structure. Introducing them to more pragmatically appropriate sequences can reduce the potential outcome of them not knowing how to navigate a refusal situation, as well as expand their vocabulary base. This lesson plan would then also be situated behind lesson 14 (as that is the chapter that deals with dating, which you need to know how to potentially refuse) and I figure that following a lesson on the speech act of requesting, it would be rather nice to have one on refusing.

Summation of Literature and Informed Lesson Plan Design

Again, coming from a position of non-nativeness, it was important to me that I look into how refusals are done, both for the sake of my learners and for bolstering my own knowledge. From Lin (2014), I learned that a lot of native speakers tend to turn emotion inward with statements like
I’m afraid or I’m not comfortable. They also tended to use 可能 (might) as a way to soften the refusal. Even the way that Chinese apologies are structured differs; in Chinese, refusals are often sequenced with excuses first, rather than regret (as it would be done in an American refusal). This article provides a really great base for sequencing, as well as giving me more of an inside look of how native speakers often put together a refusal.

I also wanted to look at whether Chinese and Taiwanese refusals differed. Since my teaching context involves using both simplified and traditional characters, it’s also important for me to understand the pragmatic differences between countries. Looking at Ren (2015), the results seem to point to a similarity in refusals, where both Chinese and Taiwanese people tend to use gratitude and express positivity of the situation, despite having to refuse. It’s good to have this information because it does let me know I can explain to my students that what works in one country will probably work in another.

Similarly, Zhang (2012) looked at the difference between American and Chinese refusals, with an outcome of face preservation between important for people conversing with others of a higher status (meaning that you would try to avoid face-threatening acts). However, in a lot of cases, direct translation can often be grammatically and pragmatically incorrect, which means that students are at a higher risk for getting into sticky situations. Explicating exactly why direct translations may be wrong, as well as the students’ current propensity to just use 對不起 can be a good segway into the lesson.

Moving forward and looking at more patterns and comparisons, Su (2022) found that refusals also differed based on what type of offer it was (such as an invitation versus a return of a favor), where explanations tended to be used more often with favors and direct/indirect refusals with invitations. The author also stipulated schedule conflicts were most often used with a direct refusal, but that learners tend to divert to their L1 for credible excuses, rather than using a cultural context that would be acceptable in Chinese. Understanding this could help learners better formulate their excuses without threatening the other person.
These same results track in further research done by Wu and Roever. Wu and Roever (2021) looked at how refusals were meant across different proficiency levels, which enables me to compare-and-contrast how both low-level language learners and native speakers would say something. The authors found that again, low-level language learners tended to immediately refuse (such as using 對不起) with nothing else to mitigate it. Comparatively, as learners progressed, they were able to delay their negations with apologies and justifications until they reached an advanced state where they might be able to use particles like 這個 (this) and 啊 (a suffix ending) to soften the tone. Through this article, I can provide concrete examples of what learners might come across, as well as have a road map of how a sequence of a refusal might be laid out.

But finally, with genuine refusals, Chinese also has fake (or ostensible) refusals. Knowing how to do both, and how to identify both, becomes something that learners should also be aware of. Su (2020) goes over how an ostensible refusal might occur and what it may contain that makes it an ostensible refusal (hearer-oriented, rather than speaker-oriented, with non-specific refusals). The author also addresses the number of times that a hearer needs to refuse (which amounts to three) and what it must emphasize (that the request is an imposition on the speakers). By identifying these core components, I can help students realize when a refusal is genuine or ostensible.

The findings from these above articles, in regard to what parts of a refusal make it a refusal in Chinese, as well as the differences in ostensible and genuine refusals, are things that I plan on including in lesson planning in the future. Below I offer a second sample lesson plan, addressing refusals, grounded in the literature review above:

Lesson Plan – Refusals

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Target learners/proficiency: Chinese 1020/novice-high
Time spent: (1) 60-minute lesson + activity

Objectives:
- Students will be able to appropriately use an ostensible refusal
- Students will be able to use a refusal sequence consisting of [turn particle] + [expression of want] + [but statement, reason] + [refusal]
Materials:
- Powerpoint, whiteboard markers, handout

Introduction to the Course Material/Warm-Up:
- Teacher will ask students questions that necessitate refusal
  - Examples include:
    - 你今天晚上來我家吃飯, 好嗎? (Come to my house to eat food, okay?)
    - 下課以後要幫我搬家 (After class, you need to help me move.)
  - Teacher will write student answers on the board and ask students what similarities and differences they see amongst classmates’ answers
- Teacher will give students handout with common refusals and ask students what they see that’s different compared to the student answers.

Lesson Activity:
- Teacher will explain that they will be talking about refusals today, the learning objectives, and what students will be able to do and understand at the end of the lesson. Teacher will ask students what words they have learned in conjunction with refusing somebody (typically对不起 or 不要, which means “don’t want”).
- Teacher will pull up Powerpoint visual aids, and if necessary switch to talking in English (for novice levels), with explicit instruction on cultural comparisons and the differences for refusals in Chinese across different cultures and communities.
  - Teacher will explicate how direct translations of refusals from an American standpoint can result in grammatically and pragmatically inappropriate responses, giving examples. Teacher explains how to sequence the refusal correctly.
  - Teacher will explain affective aspects and that Chinese speakers tend to use softening devices and emotion before a refusal.
  - Teacher will explicate that different types of refusals may have different approaches, such as explanations versus indirect refusals with scheduling conflicts.
  - Teacher will give a sequence of [turn particle] + [expression of want] + [but statement, reason] + [refusal] to the students
    - Teacher will have students create their own sentences and lead them through construction of the sequence.
- Teacher will introduce a scenario of ostensible refusal through modeling dialogue and ask whole class what seems different to the sentences they created before, writing their answers on the board.
  - Teacher will explicate the difference between ostensible refusal and genuine refusal, saying that a genuine refusal needs to have at least three different turns and is usually hearer-oriented with non-specific refusals.
- Teacher will guide students in creating new sentences for genuine and ostensible refusals.

Formative Assessment:
- In a role play activity involving a formal situation, teacher will introduce a scenario of a boss inviting some employees to dinner (With the teacher playing the boss. They will give one ostensible refusal and one genuine refusal of their choice, applying what they have learned).
  - Students should be able to use a refusal sequence consisting of [turn particle] + [expression of want] + [but statement, reason] + [refusal]