

Foreword

In the seemingly homogeneous New England town where I grew up more than a half century ago, there was virtually no discussion of cultural or linguistic diversity. The languages of our grandparents had been casualties of the world wars and of a grand national project to construct a mythical, normative, whitestream ‘America’, though some of those languages (French, German) were repackaged in ‘foreign language’ classes and presented to us in middle school. (There, we memorized some phrases and learned grammatical rules, but never really learned to hold a conversation.)

As I came of age in the 1970s and ’80s I became aware that there was a bigger world outside my white, working-class, English-speaking town. I made the decision to study Spanish because I knew it was the language of the future in the US. (I didn’t realize then that it was also the language of the *past*, at least in a large part of the US that had been Mexican territory until the treaty of Hidalgo in 1848 (and after the Spanish conquest of native territories).) That decision opened worlds for me, enriching my life in ways I never could have imagined possible, and leading me, somewhat unpredictably, to a career centered on bilingual and multicultural education.

But really all I was doing was catching up with the rest of the world – one where bi- or multilingualism is *the norm*, and where people move across geopolitical, cultural and linguistic borders all the time. And that world has caught up with all of us now.

The young people represented in this volume, and many of the chapter authors, grew up with far more cultural and linguistic diversity than I did. Several are Indigenous scholars, whose families have had to work hard to preserve their cultural heritage in the face of genocide and erasure. Others are immigrants or children of immigrants whose families were pushed and pulled by complex social, cultural, political, economic and ecological changes that pressed them to re-start life in new lands. The factors that propelled that movement are not new – humans have moved across history – but arguably, they have been speeding up, and will continue to do so, given rapidly changing technologies, volatile global politics and intense environmental pressures.

While the challenges that motivate this movement are real, the possibilities that they can engender are exciting, if we are able to imagine them. Contemporary migration brings together people with diverse ways of knowing, doing, being, thinking, speaking, talking and learning. We need all of these possibilities on the table in order to re-imagine a future for all beings on the planet, in the threat of ecological and social collapse. And schools are the meeting ground for the exchange.

But how can schools recognize and build on the knowledge that abounds in ‘superdiverse’ communities, and that culturally and linguistically diverse students bring to the classroom from their respective ancestral histories? What would it mean for schools to help all students to revitalize, sustain and *expand* all students’ linguistic and cultural repertoires, rather than playing a constraining, narrowing, and standardizing role, as has been historically the case? What would this work look like in classrooms and communities?

The authors in this volume show what is possible when we step out of the strictures of monoglossia and resist assimilative pedagogical approaches to cultural homogenization. They offer *models* and *possibilities*, not formulas. Their work is set in a wide variety of global contexts, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, Colombia, Spain, Germany and Australia. They offer approaches to learning across the K-16 spectrum as well as in informal spaces within communities. Their suggestions should be adapted to local contexts and circumstances, and used as inspiration to imagine other possibilities, specific to your locale.

The authors center their work in what has been called the ‘trans-’ turn in the social sciences, encapsulated in a proliferation of (relatively) new linguistic terms, including translanguaging, transculturality, transraciolinguistics, translocal pedagogies, transmodalities, transcultural repositioning. In all of these words, the prefix ‘trans-’ suggests movement, fluidity and change. It invites us to cross over borders and move through walls that have been erected by humans and reinforced by social institutions.

Schools are one of the main institutions that have helped to maintain those borders, by sorting, separating and categorizing people and things. We divide subject matter, allotting a fixed number of minutes to each, marked by bells. We separate children by gender, age, language, presumed abilities and social positions. We have students check boxes to determine where they belong in the social order, and then take up those categories into their sense of self. This is done in the name of teaching, equity, excellence, and standardization, but it seems driven by a need to assert control over the messy hybridity of life, and, more insidiously, by humans’ drive to have dominion over everything.

The ‘trans-’ turn reminds us that those boxes and categories are socially constructed. They are built from practices that we invented to reinforce difference and make sure that everyone stays in their place. Schools have played a large force in that policing. But the authors in this book show us

how schools could do the opposite: encourage, celebrate, and create space for students to take up multiple social identities, to position and reposition themselves as they move across different contexts, to select from their repertoires of linguistic and cultural practice to express themselves creatively and to connect with others across the lines that would otherwise divide.

In this book you will see pedagogical approaches that build on, sustain, support and expand students' flexible, versatile, fluid, boundary-crossing work in terms of language, culture and identity, and that give them room to showcase their complex repertoires as they assemble diverse semiotic resources in creative ways. These are *transgressive* pedagogies: ones that go against the grain, critically questioning...everything. They are *transformational*, doing much more than just critiquing what is, but offering possibilities that create new possibilities. They are *transcendent*, helping us to rise to our best selves as we go over the walls we have built to keep things apart, and to see possibility in what lies beyond.

You will also read about language *revitalization* efforts in Indigenous communities, and *heritage* language programs for children of immigrants. The efforts to preserve, revitalize and maintain home languages sits in productive tension with recognition of the dynamic and shifting nature of linguistic and cultural practices. We can *both* revitalize heritage traditions *and* honor the creative ways young people mix and re-mix and create new forms.

The authors in this volume treat culture with great respect: in ways that honor how people from diverse traditions read, write, listen, speak and do things in the world. At the same time, they resist simplistic, static and 'essentialized' understandings of group differences, instead attending to the contextual complexity of everyday cultural practices with a critically reflective eye. You will hear many stories, both beautiful and painful, about life for young people in cultural diasporas and contexts of superdiversity. I hope you will add your own stories to the mix, and those of the students in your classrooms.

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