Chapter 12
Preparation and Assessment of Individuals to Work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Others

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ABSTRACT

Education, in any setting, must prepare individuals to sensitively relate to and productively collaborate with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Individuals (CLDI) on multiple levels in various contexts. Undergirded in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and constructivism, the study upon which the chapter is based, uses narrative analysis to determine resonant concepts: level appropriate key understandings derived by learners as a result of interactions (with peers and instructor, course activities and materials) within a course or program of study. Learners must unravel information, make sense of interactions, engage in critical reflection, and come to understandings upon which they act as citizens. Thus, learning takes place in the context of critical reflection and self and societal confrontations. Analysis of a capstone assignment in a course that prepares pre-service and in-service teachers to work with CLDI evidenced four clusters of resonant concepts relating to foundations of education, awareness, response, and advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

Technology has enabled members of society to access information which once resided between the pages of books housed in specific repositories. More than ever the role of teacher/trainer is to design and facilitate interactions through which students/employees develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are personally, professionally, and socio-politically meaningful (hooks, 1994; Grande, 2004; Rendón, 2009). Learners must unravel information, make sense of interactions, engage in critical reflection, and come to understandings upon which they act (Freire, 1998; hooks, 1994). They become co-authors of their learning with instructors as facilitators of and
inquirers into this authorship (Magolda, 2004; Grande, 2004; Rendón, 2009) as they provide inspiration and tools to enhance the process. For instance, instead of providing learners with a list of propositions for working with culturally and linguistically diverse people (CLDI), the instructor provides learning opportunities and interactions that enable the learners to determine key principles or guidelines for working with CLDI. If one accepts that the education ought to move all concerned toward the kind of critical reflection and action that Freire (1998) and hooks (1994) call praxis, how, then, is learning to be assessed? In other words, how does one find out what has been learned? The study that will be described in this chapter is undergirded in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL - Atkinson, 2001; Gilpin & Liston, 2009; Huber & Hutchings, 2005; Huber & Morreale, 2002; Kreber, 2006) and Cognitive and Social Constructivism (Piaget, 1977 & Vygotsky, 1978), with narrative analysis (Casey, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) to determine resonant concepts and the interactions that facilitated them, in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement course for pre-service and in-service teachers. The course prepares teachers to work with CLDI.

This chapter highlights the process and findings of an analysis of resonant concepts derived from an end of semester reflective assignment. Narrative analysis of the assignment for 49 (32 undergraduate students and 17 graduate) students included reviewing and coding (labeling and grouping) responses and identifying emergent themes (Casey, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) to determine resonant concepts and the interactions that facilitated them, in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement course for pre-service and in-service teachers. The course prepares teachers to work with CLDI.

Resonant concepts are the results of how individuals relate to old and new information and individuals or groups in the context of critical reflection, including self and societal confrontations. Often during reflection individuals have to identify and challenge their own biases and prejudices, as well as those evident in institutions within our global society. Resonant concepts may be determined by analyzing learning artifacts, including written assignments, journals, and portfolios. Interactions may be with instructors, peers, and other individuals such as the people interviewed for the project in this course. The course materials, such as traditional textbooks, case studies, legislation, and videos, also impact resonant concepts. Ideally, resonant concepts should reflect well-crafted learning outcomes (what teachers expect students to know and be able to do at the end of a period of instruction) and research on best practice. Analysis of written assignments often provides more specific qualitative information about students’ learning than traditional indicators such as multiple choice tests. Written assignments often require students to include rationale, examples, and/or other supporting details, which allow the instructor greater insights into the reason for particular responses (examples of qualitative information about students’ learning). Alone or in concert with other activities, analysis of resonant concepts is useful in determining key understandings of students in relation to a course or topic of study. This kind of analysis also enables the instructor to see misconceptions and gaps in learning and is very helpful in revising a course to improve teaching and learning.

While the broader term CLDI is the more suitable for this study, other terms, such as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are used synonymously throughout the chapter to maintain the original terminology and context of previous works. This chapter’s author understands that not all global organizations will need to work with English.