Multimodal, Embodied Learning and Listening
ELLs and Intercultural Dialogue in Two Community Projects

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ABSTRACT

This study is framed from a theoretical perspective that values the incorporation of reflection and multimodal products in service-learning that engage ELLs in "real-time" language learning. Using a pedagogical framework that is translingual and culturally sustaining, the author examines a community project in which the ELLs in a bridge-writing course at a major U.S. university shared their languages and cultures with third-graders at a local school. Triangulating her analysis of the students' surveys and multiple reflective course writings (as per grounded theory) with a discussion of the students' multimodal products, the author argues for the positive emotional impact of the project, which the ELLs saw as enhancing their communicative skills and intercultural understanding. Moreover, multimodal products played a key role in making the students' languages and cultures visible to one another, both in class and beyond. The article concludes with pedagogical recommendations, including the importance of integrating community projects within larger course content and learning goals.

INTRODUCTION

Analyzing her ELL's multimodal products and their effects in relationship to the students' reflective writing, the author details the value of culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) and translingual (Lu & Horner, 2013) pedagogies that involve college-level ELLs in service-learning projects both on- and off a university campus. Specifically, she discusses how the ELL students in a bridge-writing course at a major U.S. university shared aspects of their languages, cultures, and experiences through artifacts and in multi-modal form in varying locations: first in-class (with one another, through Culture Circles) and then off-campus (first, with third graders at a local, low-income school, and then with other university students and faculty at the end-of-term first-year writing conference). With in-class activities such as the Culture Circles providing the basis for the community work, she draws on her ELLs' reflective writing and provides lesson plans that build on one another, feature the students' languages and cultures, and incorporate artifacts and / or multimodal texts (children's books, videos, internet pictures)—with the result of forwarding intercultural learning and understanding.

This article analyzes the function of material objects in forwarding cross-cultural dialogue as a form of shared rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe, 2005), as they became the media

through and around which discussions of difference and sameness take place. Honing communicative practices among people of different languages and culture and facilitated through the use of multimodal products, the community project and corresponding class work developed the students' intercultural communicative competence, or willingness to engage with and learn from other cultures (Byram, 1997). Centered in the middle, the project at a local low-income school led from and to other aspects of the course that foregrounded the multilingual students' languages and cultures as assets, sites of inquiry, and resources for their own—and others'—learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study was conducted with a combination of culturally-sustaining theories and pedagogies. Translingualism forms the primary theoretical framework while service-learning and the use of multi-modal products were the pedagogical approaches used to connect theory and practice.

Translingualism

A translingual/ multilingual pedagogical approach, which Lu and Horner (2013) define as "one that recognizes difference as the norm…a disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences" (p. 585) cultivate a "willingness to explore with students what they care to advance about people, languages and cultures" (p. 600). As a student-centered pedagogy, translingualism pays mind to the local: the particularity of student cultures, languages, and experiences—and links the local and international (Garcia & Longo, 2013). It acknowledges the increasingly "glocal" aspects of service-learning and of education both in the U.S. and abroad (the local in the global, the global in the local). Building on students' "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002, p. 623), this pedagogy also acknowledges the expert translingual and transcultural practices that students already use both in and out of the classroom (Horner, Donahue, & NeCamp, 2011; Matsuda & Silva, 2005; Prieto-Arranz, Juan-Garau, & Jacob, 2013).

Service-Learning

Associated with theories of experiential learning (Dewey, 1910), service-learning is defined as a pedagogy that "combines learning goals and community service…to enhance both student growth and the common good" (Bandy, 2018), and is based on the assumption that students can learn from the experience of "serving," as well as from the act of reflecting on their service (Eyler & Giles, 1996; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983). Through reflection, students recognize "their own potential as knowledge producers– a resource for others" (Crossman & Kite, 2007, p. 150). Aligning with this perspective, the present study uses ELLs' reflective writing to document learning outcomes.

Many discussions of service-learning have tended to highlight U.S. students privileged by class, nationality, and often race, working with presumably less privileged community partners, thus raising questions of balance and reciprocity. But in the case of community projects that involve ELLs, the balance may be differently distributed. Calling for reciprocity in service-

learning that involves such students, Wurr and Hellebrandt (2007) suggest another perspective: one that recognizes the relatively marginalized position of the ELLs in U.S. culture. Unlike other studies / projects that discuss U.S. students strengthening either their foreign language skills, often abroad or working toward ESL certification (Carr, Eyring, & Gallego, 2006; Purmensky, 2009), this article, as does Wurr's (2009) study, analyzes the experiences of non-U.S. college students studying temporarily here in the U.S., at a large Midwestern university where their English language ability was sometimes viewed by other students, faculty, and administrators as an impediment (Fraiberg, Wang, & Yu, 2017).

Moreover, this study emphasizes the distinctive learning that can occur on *both* sides when community and non-U.S. students participate together on projects. Though some projects position ELL students as providing discipline-specific skills to their community partners (such as business expertise—see Crossman & Kite, 2007), other projects / studies like this one focus on the unique "service" that ELLs can provide in terms of their distinctive languages, cultures, and international experiences (Levesque, 2006; Sousa, 2015), thus positioning the ELLs as "resident experts" (Crossman & Kite, 2007).

The fact that the college ELLs in this study were also in a bridge writing course provided another complicating layer in the often uneven power dynamics that exist between service-learning "provider" and "recipient." Hutchinson (2007) describes the marginalized status of basic writing students who often "at best are challenged by writing, and at worst, are scared to death that they will not succeed" (p. 329); in providing these students with the opportunity to contribute successfully to the community, service-learning has the potential to enhance their low self-confidence (Arca, 1997; Hutchinson, 2007).

Multi-Modal Forms

Translingual scholars view multimodal products as a key form of communication in what Pratt calls the intercultural contact zone (1991). As Lu and Horner (2013) write, "from a translingual perspective, all writing always involves rewriting and transition, inevitably engaging the labor of re-contextualizing (and renewing) language, language practices, users, conventions, and contexts" (p. 586). The "renegotiation of meaning" operates in all language acts (Horner, Donahue, & NeCamp, 2011; Horner, Selfe, & Lockridge, 2013). Scholars such as Canagarajah (2016) extend the "trans-" metaphor to encompass other forms of communication: "the 'trans' in translingual…also perceives communication as going beyond words and accommodating other semiotic systems (such as sound, visuals, graphics, body, and ecology) in creating meaning" (p. 450). Referencing Canagarajah's (2013) expansion of the "trans-" prefix, Kiernan (2015) asserts that "modality and semiotics are central components of the translingual approach" (p. 304). These teacher-scholars argue against both mono-modality and monolingualism—what Block (2014) claims as the lingual bias in language acquisition models that focus solely on grammatical competence (as opposed to communication).

Multimodality can enhance transnational communication for both presenter *and* listener (Gonzales, 2015)—a negotiation further developed when discussion circulates around the sharing of Pahl and Roswell (2010)'s "artifactual literacies" that leverage the incorporation of tactile and auditory objects, situating students' home experiences as both platform and catalyst for their learning. Drawing from students' knowledge of the meaning of such artifacts (their cultural resonances, their links to space and place, their evocation of personal and community stories) deepens student learning and enhances literacy development (Pahl & Roswell, 2010). In

the transnational communicative setting, such objects help create a space for multilingual students and their audiences to practice Ratcliffe's (2005) concept of "rhetorical listening" (2005) as a "trope for interpretive invention" and "code for cross-cultural conduct" (p. 1) that "tie[s] the personal (a personal claim)…to the political (a cultural logic) without totally collapsing differences between the two" (p. 32).

This author thus argues for a fruitful convergence of service-learning, translingualism, and multimodality, through which her ELL students make, share, and encounter multimodal presentations that make visible cultures, cultural practices, and rhetorical strategies that might not always be evident in more formal academic environments. Incorporating multimodal projects and cultural artifacts allows students, both U.S. and non-U.S., to *see* and *hear* one another's perspectives, experiences, cultures, and even languages. The multimodal, embodied, and artifact-based presentations of the multilingual student-participants (through Culture Circles, the community project, and the first-year writing conference) help surface and make ELLs' experiences and cultures visible to others across lines of difference.

PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

Course Design

The course assignment and the corresponding community projects discussed in this article were created in response to the changes in student demographics. Over the past five years, the instructor's institution has seen a 10% increase in its international student enrollment (Statistical Report). In fall 2016, it had over 7000 international students from over 130 countries, with a significant proportion of these students coming from China; indeed, the Chinese undergraduate population has increased by 30% in the past 10 years.

Even though she had integrated more typical service-learning projects into her past teaching (so that in Dean's (2003) terms, her students had written *for* their community partners—grants, volunteer brochures, and the like; and they had also co-written books *with* children and with elders—the instructor recognized that a project involving the distinctive population in her bridge-writing class required a community project that would feature the home languages and cultures of her diverse students. In collaboration with a local school teacher, she devised a project in which her university students, mostly ELLs, would share aspects of their languages and cultures with the third-graders at a local, low-income school, where 90% of the children were on the free-lunch or reduced lunch program. In turn, the project would help the third-grade classroom meet the district's curricular requirements in social studies. Also, as the third-grade teacher put it, many of the students in the school might not have had such a chance to spend time with university students from other countries. Over the course of three semesters (Fall 2014, Fall 2015, and Spring 2017), 31 ELLs (of the 34 in the instructor's course) ended up participating in the community project (the other three did not for reasons of illness, absence, etc.).

Assignments

Each time, the visit to the school took place midway through the semester, and lasted 1-1/2 hours. The ELLs went there during one of their regular Friday class time sessions, which allowed time for them to get to and from the school within the regular Friday class period. The

school visit was then followed by a second form of "service" that took place on campus, as the students shared multimodal Remixes of their languages and cultures with the other students, faculty, and administrators who attended the program's end-of-term first-year writing conference. This event derives from a course assignment that occurs as the instructor's fourth project, in which students are asked to "remix" a prior writing assignment or class experience into multimodal form (video, PowerPoint, poster, etc.). These Remixes were subsequently presented at the First-Year Writing Conference held near the semester's end. Each semester, anywhere from 500-700 (out of roughly 4000 first-year writing students) participate, and since at least half of the bridge writing instructors involve *all* of their students (who are mostly ELLs), around one-fourth of the conference participants are now ELLs. Thus, the opportunity the conference creates for the non-U.S. students to share aspects of their languages and cultures there is significant. Essentially, to use Maloy, Comeau-Kirschner, and Amaral's (2015) words, the conference helps position the ELLs as "respected members of a campus community who have knowledge to share with other community members" (p. 266)-- here, the other first-year writing students, teachers, and administrators who also attend and participate in this event.

All told, the students had three opportunities to write about the community project. First, the students completed a short survey in class right after the school visit. Secondly, they wrote a more extended writing in response to the questions: What did I most enjoy? What did I learn and how might this be important? Modeled on a "What? So What? Now What?" framework (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jaspar, 2001), this writing was done within a week after the school visit, and took place within the regular structure of a class in which students did multiple in-class reflective writings. Finally, the students had the option of writing about the school visit in their final course papers, written near the end of the term.

For the first-year writing conference, the bridge-writing students made their Remixes and prepared for their conference preparations both in and out of class. In class, the instructor initiated extensive peer reviews of both Remixes and the presentations. Each student presentation was thus discussed, rehearsed, and revised multiple times before its final delivery at the conference, which helped ensure quality products and confident student speakers there.

Research Questions

To analyze the ELLs' writing and multimodal products in the terms discussed here, the instructor sought and received approval from her university's Institutional Review Board. Examining her students' work over the past three times she taught the bridge-writing course / community project, including drawings, multimodal products, and reflective responses, the author had three questions in mind:

1. What did the students see themselves as gaining from the service-learning project?
2. How did the multimodal products forward both the community project and the related course activities before and after?
3. How did the service-learning project map onto other class activities, both before and after?

Ultimately, course and paper assessment was disaggregated from the ELLs' reflective writing discussed here, as the students co-created the criteria by which their papers were graded, and separate from this study.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Over the course of three semesters, a total of 31 ELLs participated in the project, out of 34 ELLs in the classes all told. The breakdown of the three classes was as follows:

SEMESTER	ELLs from China	ELLs from countries other than China	U.S. students
Spring 2014	70%	12%	18%
Fall 2015	69%	6%	25%
Spring 2017	78%	11%	11%

Figure 1: *Student Population*

On average, 82% of the students in these classes were ELLs from outside the U.S., and of that percentage, 72% were from China. The students from other countries came from (other) countries in Asia, the Middle East, and South America. Even so, some of these students were transnationally diverse, as was the case with the Brazilian student whose parents were Japanese, or the student from the Dominican Republic, who had spent much of his childhood in Detroit. Linguistic and ethnic / racial diversity was also evident in the U.S. category, as some of these students were African American (and fluent in African American vernacular); others were of Mexican heritage and bilingual in both Spanish and English.

Data Analysis

This study draws on all three student responses (the survey, the post-event reflection, the end-of-term assignment). As per grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), the instructor used a recursive process to analyze the ELLs' reflective writing. The process was primarily inductive, as major themes and keywords emerged from her reading and re-reading the students' writing, and then the students' writing was sorted in these categories. In turn, the student writings are triangulated with multimodal products made by both the ELLs and the schoolchildren.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

What the students saw themselves gaining from the school project

As the author has argued elsewhere (Meier, 2015), nearly all of her students saw the advantages of the community project. According to initial surveys, the participating non-U.S. students (n= 31) saw themselves as gaining personal enjoyment, increased language ability, enhanced understanding of U.S. culture, and increased appreciation for community projects, as shown in Figure 2.

Though overall the ELLs' responses to the question about enhanced communication skills were lower here than their stated sense of enjoyment and their appreciation of the opportunity to learn and share across cultures, a total of 72% felt that the school visit had increased their language ability in English either somewhat or a lot.

SURVEY QUESTION	Percentage responding "a lot"	Percentage responding "Somewhat."
Enjoyment	86%	14%
Increased language development	35%	37%
Enhanced understanding local U.S. culture	71%	28%
Increased appreciation for such projects	71%	28%

Figure 2: *Survey Results*

As for the survey's high responses on positive affect and intercultural learning, these figures were mirrored by a second part of the survey that required more reflective responses. Asked if they would recommend continuing the project in future classes, 100% of the survey takers said yes. When asked why, the ELLs responded as follows:[1]

CATEGORY	Strength
Positive Affect	86%
Enhanced Understanding U.S. Culture	35%
Communication	21%

Figure 3: *Survey – Recommendation Question*

In the table above, "Positive Affect" responses used words or phrases such as "good time," "enjoyable," and "had a lot of fun." The responses expressing an enhanced understanding of U.S. included comments such as: "I learned a lot about U.S. life culture." Those in the "communication" category contained language such as "Helped me to communicate."

Overall, these responses were mirrored by the ELLs' subsequent responses on their follow-up in-class writing reflections, in which they were asked to respond to these questions: What did they enjoy most about the project? What did they learn and how might this be important? Those responses were coded as follows:

CATEGORY	Strength
Positive Affect	57%
Communication	21%
Children as Receptive Audience	11%

Figure 4: *Post-Event Reflective Writings, Question 1*

Here, a new category was added: "Children as Receptive Audience," and as represented in responses such as: "children were very active in asking questions."

In terms of what the ELLs reported learning from the project, the responses were as follows:

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[1] Note that some students' responses fit into two or more categories, as in: "Helped me to communicate and it was fun."

CATEGORY	Strength
Intercultural Learning	35%
Communication	28%
Positive Affect	21%

Figure 5: *Post-Event Reflective Writings, Question 2*

The Intercultural Learning category encompassed such responses as: "Chinese and American forms of study are different."

Consistent across all the post-event responses were both Communication and Positive Affect. One reason for the latter might be the playful quality of the school visit, as exemplified in a student response like "it was a good break." But additionally, another 11% of the ELLs specifically saw the children as an eager and appreciative conversation partner (on children as positive community partners, see Hummel, 2013).

Finally, the ELLs' appreciation for the project and its intercultural component was evident in the course reflections that they wrote over six weeks later, at the term's end. While this assignment asked students to focus on their reading and writing processes, it also required that they include, analyze, and reflect upon at least one "class activity" in the context of their semester's learning. The students who chose to write about the school visit as their "class activity" had to go against the grain of this assignment (which could be construed as emphasizing an *in*-class, *not* out-of-class, activity). Moreover, the school visit competed with an array of *other* class activities, such as reading discussion, peer-review, an MLA vs. APA "competition," and the Culture Circles discussed below. Still, a significant number (61%, or 19 of the 31 ELLs who attended the school over three semesters' time) chose to reflect at length on the school visit as a significant learning experience. *How* they wrote about this experience nearly two months after the school visit is shown in Figure 6.

CATEGORY	STRENGTH
Intercultural Learning	95%
Breakdown:	Breakdown:
→ Teaching children	47%
← Learning from children	21%
←→ Both teaching and learning	26%
Positive Affect	78%
Children as Receptive Audience	37%

Figure 6: *End-of-term Reflections on Community Project*

Here, the Intercultural Learning responses were more nuanced, as in: "This event is really a good chance for Chinese students and Spartans from other places learn about the [sic] Michigan and America" and "It also a great chance to deliver the Chinese knowledge to them." Positive Affect was signaled by such responses as "kept having conversation and fun together" and "we all left with a smiling face and in a good humor." A typical response to the third category was: "My favorite part about this activity was the children were interested in everything about you."

Clearly, even six weeks after the school visit, a number of the ELLs still recalled the visit with appreciation, especially in terms of the opportunity to learn and share aspects of their home

cultures and languages with appreciative schoolchildren. Interestingly, here the affective response seemed lessened in comparison to what the ELLs wrote earlier, right after the event. Instead, the emphasis at the term's end was on the larger sharing of cultures and languages that took place at the school. Moreover, greater numbers of the students seemed to recognize the role of the children as an appreciative audience. Significantly (represented in the breakdown section above), nearly half of the ELLs interpreted intercultural value as the opportunity to *teach* aspects of their cultures to others (signified by the arrow → above). Another group ascribed value to learning *from* the children about US culture (←). Still a third group described *both* learning and teaching about U.S. / home cultures (←→).

Overall, these end-of-term reflections point to ELLs who experienced increased self-confidence in explaining their home cultures to others; for example, one student wrote: "I needed to not only speak the second language which is not really familiar for me, but also tried to figure out how to express so kids would understand what I was saying and were willing to participate with me." In other words, the in-the-moment exigency to communicate with the third graders helped move this student language-learner from the "highly controlled (disfluent) process of the language" [as experienced in classroom learning] to a more experiential, "automatic (fluent) language processing" (Askildson, Kelly, & Mick, 2013, p. 408; see also DeKeyser, 2007).

Furthermore, the ELLs' positive response to the communicative challenges at the school counters what Vidrine-Isbell (2017), using social neuroscience as her framework, claims may be the negative responses experienced by ELLs who have studied English primarily for "test achievement, with methods such as textbook memorization and cram schools" (p. 96). Learning the language in an environment of high stress, many ELL's may "re-experience negative emotions when re-producing English;" many thus associate English with "feelings of anxiety, stress, and low self-worth" (Vidrine-Isbell, 2017, p. 97). In contrast, the school visit provided the ELLs with a more positive opportunity (and audience) for language exchange and learning.

How multimodality impacted the community project

In a translingual sense, the community project provided both ELLs and the schoolchildren with the opportunity to negotiate and communicate across linguistic and cultural differences—a process that in this context led each to draw on multimodal resources: those that the ELLs had brought with them to the school (artifacts, drawings, names in their home languages) and those that both the children and ELLs used in the classroom (a globe, the world map that the teacher uncurled for the visit, cell phone images, drawings made on the spot). Interestingly, though, while only two ELLs cited multimodality in their original post-event survey responses, perhaps because the nature of the survey questions led them in other directions, as high as 47% stressed multimodality in their end-of-term reflections. Here, multimodality was signaled in a descriptive response, such as: "children draw some picture for me" and "We drew our home." As evident from the latter quote, multimodality served to forward intercultural communication. As one ELL put it: "I show them [the children] some pictures which is on my phone about the city of China. I want them to know how the Chinese cities look like." Such illustrations in the interest of intercultural understanding and communication also worked in reverse, as in the case of the Chinese student who expressed his enhanced understanding of the popularity of pets in the U.S., made visible through a child's drawing.

The multimodal nature of intercultural exchanges was also evident in the drawings shared and made at the school by each of the parties, and as observed by this article's writer (the

project's teacher-observer). In a translingual sense, the community project provided these ELLs with the opportunity to negotiate and communicate across linguistic and cultural difference—a process that frequently led them and their third-grade partners to draw on the multimodal resources at their disposal. For example, the fact that the ELLs had introduced their names in their home languages led the third-graders to make requests for their own names in the ELLs' home languages; as one ELL wrote: "They [the children] all curious about…how to say and write their names in Chinese." Such a linguistic exchange is demonstrated in the drawing below, where the ELL student drew a playful picture that represented both himself, and the third grader, and their names in his (Mandarin) home language:

Translingual resources thus became specific sources of communication and connection between the two sets of students.

Multimodally speaking, the exchange was transcultural as well as translingual. For example, the children "drew back" pictures of their own neighborhoods; such drawings provided the occasion for transnational learning for both parties. As one student wrote about these shared drawings of home neighborhoods, "they [the children] all feel interesting [interested?] and amazing with the house I lived. Because if these children go to China, they will see most families live in one room which Chinese called unite in a big building. Many families will live in a big building which include my family. However, most children [in the U.S.]...lived in many independent single houses." As he wrote in his final reflective essay, comparing his own drawing with the one the child made (reproduced below) allowed each to *see* differences in their respective household upbringings:
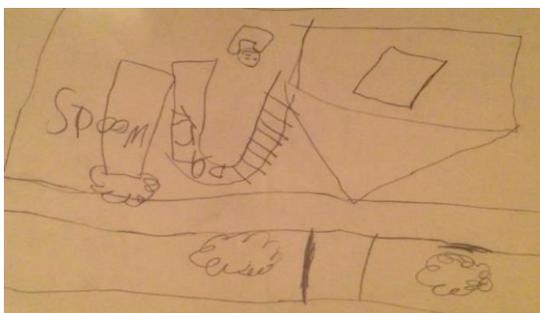
How the service-learning project mapped onto other class activities

One of the reasons the community project worked well was because the university course attached to it emphasized the ELLs' home languages and cultures from the start—not just through specific activities that would be replicated at the school, but more broadly, in terms of class activities paving the way. Perhaps the best examples of this were the Culture Circles, an in-class activity introduced the second week of the college term. In the Circles, the students were purposefully sorted into groups of three or four, with each group representing students from different places (so that even if all the students in a group were from China, they were arranged to reflect different regions of China). Next each group of students was invited to prepare a presentation through which they could use objects, drawings, and internet images, in order to share aspects of their home cultures and languages with the other students in class. In turn, the other students were asked to take notes and ask questions of the speaker-presenters. As is evident from the students' end-of-term reflections on their course learning, the Culture Circles anticipated the school visit, and also contributed to the ELLs' presentations at the first-year writing conference, held at the term's end.

In their end-of-course reflective writings, 58% (or 20 of the 34 ELLs in the three classes)[2] chose to discuss the importance of the Culture Circles in their course learning, and all of them did so in terms of the intercultural understanding engendered by this exercise. Moreover, many saw their intercultural understanding supported by multimodality. One Chinese student, for example, described what he had learned about Dubai, through that student's sharing of a special tobacco pipe from home. Another (Chinese) student described his learning about the American sport of golf, through the golf club that the U.S. student brought with him to class.

CATEGORY	Strength
Intercultural Learning	90%
Breakdown:	Breakdown:
→ Teaching children	10%
← Learning from children	35%
←→ Both teaching and learning	45%
Multimodality	35%
Cultural "fusion"	50%

Figure 7: *End-of-term Reflections on Culture Circles*

As indicated in Figure 7 above, 45% of the ELLs writing about the Culture Circles saw this class activity supporting *both* their learning and teaching about cultures, while 50% emphasized its important function of bringing classmates together, as in: "During the process of exchanging the cultural artifacts, we not only have a broadern [sic] horizon, but also promote the communication between students. Gradually, we get close to each other and the gap between different cultures

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[2] Note that this number (34) is larger than the number of ELLS (31) discussed earlier, because while not all the ELLs were able to participate in the school project (due to illness, absence, etc.), all did participate in the Culture Circles.

disappeared at last." Ultimately, the circles helped challenge and even revise earlier stereotypes the students had held of one another's home cultures: Thus, students described learning that China was actually a diverse country with a mix of subcultures and languages; that Detroit was much more than its superficial and media-driven image as a "crime capital," and even, more locally, that the relative isolation of international students on our college campus was not necessarily by choice.

It is not surprising, then, that when the First-Year Writing Conference came around, a number of the international students chose to share (and make more visible) aspects of their culture that had been revealed through the Culture Circles and their visit to the school. In his final reflective paper, for example, one student made this obvious when he wrote:

> I found out many Americans think that although China is a big country, it is all the same, no diversity, nothing special while I was talking with them. However, almost every part of China is different; they have different cultures, different accents, different foods, architectures and…So my group mates and I decided to make this video to prove that there is a big misunderstanding among Americans about Chinese.

Other students chose to tell stories of culture shock and even the isolation they had experienced in coming to the university. Moreover, these students often imbedded their home languages into their multimodal products, thus putting English and their home languages side by side, and essentially, appealing to a bilingual audience. In one such video, for example, the students incorporated interviews they had conducted with one another about their "culture shock" in coming to the U.S., putting the responses in both Mandarin and English.

To me the culture shock is food

对我来说文化冲击就是吃的东西

Such bilingualism was typical of a number of the multimodal projects presented by these students at the conference, and in its own way, suggests the ELLs' assertion of the right to their own languages.

In still other presentations, student groups chose to describe the school visit, and in two instances, to create and share at the conference the children's books that they envisioned as useful reading for the severely under-resourced school. In the first example, the student's pictorial account of his home language constituted a translingual interpretation of his name and its meaning, which this group incorporated into their "story" of MSU's cultural diversity:[3]

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[3] The text here reads: "Olà! That is how ____ says hello. His name means: forest, mountain, strength or big, (and) big tree. _____ means the big big tree in a forest on a mountain!"
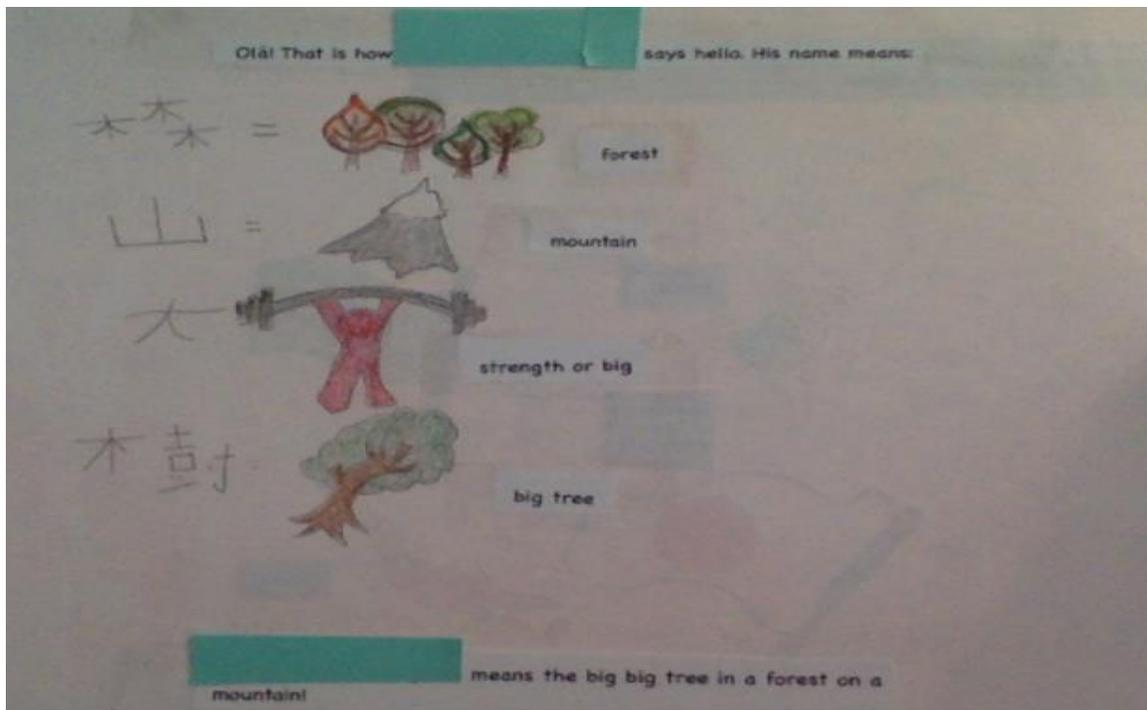
In the second children's book shared at the conference, a group of Chinese students had made an illustrated translation of, in the words of the student-makers, "an ancient Chinese story"; below is a copy of the book's cover:
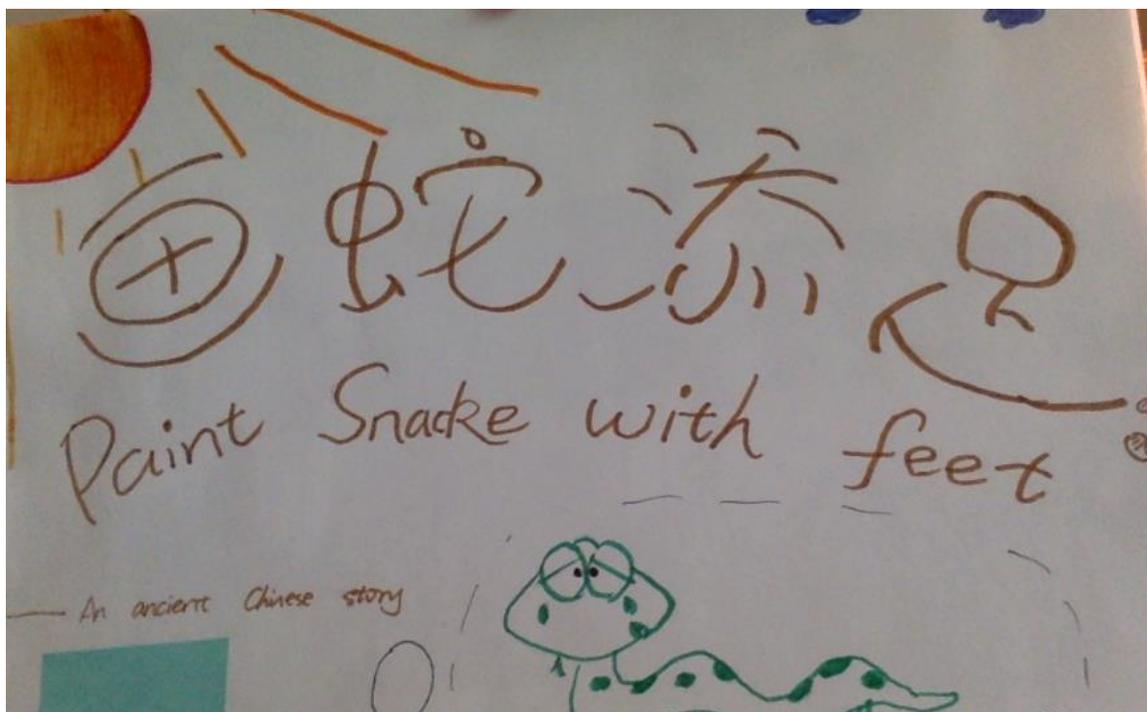
In both instances, the students' cultures and languages were made visible to the reader / audience through the use of images and shared home language.

The conference thus became an on-campus space in which ELLs could share aspects of their languages and cultures in multimodal form, just as they had done earlier, in the Culture Circles in class, and at the local school. At a university which touts "global citizenship" as a learning goal (Undergraduate Learning Goals), and yet where the international (mostly Chinese) students may feel isolated, the work of this instructor's ELL students who subsequently shared their languages and cultures multimodally was significant, in forwarding transnational dialogue and learning (see Meier, Gannon, Caesar, & Medei, 2018). As Tania Dreher (2009) notes, "Listening across difference represents a subtle shift from seeking better understanding of an 'other' to listening for better understanding of relationships and complicities, issues and the workings of privilege" (p. 451). "Rhetorical listening," as Krista Radcliffe (2005) defines it, reverses the concept of "understanding" to "standing under," which means "letting discourses wash over, through, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics" (p. 28). Such listening occurred in the university classroom, at the elementary school, and at the first-year writing conference.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on her assessment of this community project, the Culture Circles, and the first-year writing conference presentations, this author recommends the following:

- **Integrate the service-learning project within the very fabric of the course and its learning objectives**. In this case, the instructor centered from the start the students' diverse languages and cultures as sites of inquiry and resources for their learning. Because the community project—the work at the school—was preceded by the in-class Culture Circles, and then followed by the students' making of Remix projects which were then shared at the first-year writing conference, each of the instances of "service-learning" ended up feeling like just one more course activity—albeit outside the class. In turn, both school visit and conference presentation were greatly influenced by, and in turn impacted, the coursework before and after, respectively.
- **Incorporate multimodality into both class and community project**, as this mode enhances ELL's communicative practices, and creates "handles" that the ELLs and their community partners can draw on, as they communicate with one another across lines of cultural and linguistic difference.
- **Feature the ELLs' languages and cultures as assets in both class and community**, as drawing on their strengths and expertise can build their self-confidence. This practice can also help ensure a more reciprocal relationship between the parties involved.

Of course, this is not to say that the work will always be easy. The school visits were complicated—in one case, by the large number of children with ADD in a particular third-grade class, and generally, by culturally different expectations of "proper" child behavior (the American children being allowed far more latitude, apparently, than what their non-U.S. counterparts had experienced as schoolchildren). Similarly, the Culture Circles generated difficult conversations that were complicated by intersectionality, as related to the complex power differentials, practices, and beliefs tied to race, class, and gender; Wendler-Shah (2015) describes as much in the case of her own community project. One semester, for instance, a

Chinese female student's introduction of her parasol, which she confessed in the Culture Circle's Q&A that she used to "keep my skin white," provoked a class conversation on how racism was constructed in various countries. In another class, the students ended up discussing whether or not women should be permitted to drive (an issue raised by a Saudi Arabian student). In a third, a lively discussion occurred around pets, and the extent to which people should be responsible for the animals that inhabited their neighborhoods. Another particularly intense discussion took place one semester around the question of the complicated social norms and expectations surrounding dating behavior.

In each case, the point was not to come to resolution, but to have these kinds of discussions and to learn from one another, while expressing respect. At the same time, the Culture Circles also helped to create a mutually supportive, trusting environment in which such discussions could take place. This author would argue, in fact, that such exchanges are all the more necessary, in this divided, increasingly global, world. In each case, getting to know one another better on the local level helped support transnational communication and understanding.

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