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Teacher Interculturality in an English as a Second Language Elementary Pull-Out Program: Teacher as Broker in the School's Community of Practice

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Abstract

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Keywords

English Language Teaching, Elementary School, Interculturality, Communities of Practice, Sociocultural Theory, Ethnographic Case Study, Multilingualism

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This case study investigated how one teacher, Lidia (a pseudonym), used her own cross-cultural experiences to socially and academically assist elementary school students who were crossing cultural boundaries of their own. This study used ethnographic interviews and classroom observations to explore Lidia's experiences and struggles as she crossed cultural boundaries and built intercultural competence and how those experiences related to her teaching methods. Lidia used stories, multicultural images, and the students' home languages so that her students could become confident in their multicultural and multilingual identities instead of solely assimilating. Teaching interculturally for Lidia meant empowering students to balance their home cultures while creating meaningful opportunities for them to practice English and school cultural norms. This study adds to literature on intercultural competence and communities of practice by exploring how interculturality may be advantageous in helping teachers work with diverse and international students by allowing them to act as brokers within the school's community. Keywords: English Language Teaching, Elementary School, Interculturality, Communities of Practice, Sociocultural Theory, Ethnographic Case Study, Multilingualism

Introduction

Mobility has increased around the world and led to growing diversity in schools as more students are either immigrants themselves or are children of immigrants (Duff, 2015). However, the official (or sometimes unofficial) language policies of states, districts, and schools maintain a dominantly standard English viewpoint that largely ignores the diverse demographics (Hornberger & Link, 2012). Sociocultural studies of classroom contexts show that students need social inclusion in order to fully benefit from education, yet Duff (2002) stated, "Large numbers of minority students in schools worldwide are at considerable risk of alienation, isolation, and failure because of the discourse and interactions that surround them on a daily basis" (p. 316). Therefore, researchers in education and applied linguistics continue to explore educational strategies that are beneficial for diverse students and that are inclusive of their linguistic strengths and cultural knowledge (see García & Wei, 2014; Gutiérrez, 2008; Lee, 2007; Moje et al., 2004 among others). A continued focus on how to provide equitable education for diverse students is necessary, so this study strives to add to the growing body of literature.

In order to exceed the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) standards, teachers are expected to be conscious of the diverse backgrounds of their students as well as the context within which students use language (TESOL International Association, 2010). However, a recent study by Baecher & Bell (2017) showed that teachers within pull-out programs do not feel as though they have enough time with their students in order to meet their needs. Therefore, it is relevant to explore how teachers within the existing ESL models such as pull-out programs make the most of their opportunities to work with their students. This study

examines how one teacher in a pull-out ESL program used intercultural skills to both learn about her diverse students' backgrounds and the contexts that they used language (TESOL International Association, 2010) as well as provide opportunities for students to speak and participate in order to get the most out of education opportunities (Norton, 2001) [1]. This study adds to the existing literature that forms a "virtuous circle" between theory and practice, or literature that shows not only how the theory of interculturality is relevant to practice but also how practice can in turn inform theory (Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013, p. 252). Research so far has mostly focused on intercultural competence within foreign language education (Baker, 2012, 2015; Byram & Feng, 2004; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Sercu, 2006). A majority of research has also focused on how to build intercultural competence in pre-service teachers through formal education, such as courses in their university programs or study abroad experiences (Byram, 1997; Ference & Bell, 2010; Frederick, Cave, & Perencevich, 2010; Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009). However, this study focuses on two aspects of intercultural competence that so far have not been thoroughly explored: the effectiveness of intercultural competence within ESL contexts in the United States to address concerns about equitable education for diverse students as well as the lived experiences of teachers outside of formal education that have led them to construct intercultural competence. In this study, I also use Wenger's (1998, 2000) concept of communities of practice in order to explore how ESL teachers can use intercultural competence to act as brokers. Instead of looking specifically at how one ESL teacher teaches culture itself (Menard-Warwick, 2008) or how she teaches intercultural competence to her students (Young & Sachdev, 2011), this study focuses on how she developed and used her own intercultural skills to act as a broker for her students to bridge their home language and culture and their new communities of practice at school, helping them to find a voice within the dominant school culture that often encourages them to leave their past behind and adopt new norms for language and other behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in sociocultural theory recognizing that learning occurs in social context and that "language emerges from social and cultural activity, and only later becomes an object of reflection" (Kramsch, 2000, p. 134). A student not only needs to access to community to get the most out of learning experiences, but learning also happens in order to make someone a member of a community to allow for further participation (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2015) reaffirmed the importance that teacher identity plays in sociocultural theory stating that "in order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them" (p. 22). Teacher identity in language learning and teaching is deeply tied to communities of practice and interculturality because of the possible role of teachers as mediators between communities and between cultures. Byram & Feng (2004) noted the role of the teacher as a mediator, and that teaching is not just an attempt to acculturate students into a new culture but to encourage students to cross cultural boundaries of their own and become parts of multiple communities. They stated, "For it is not the purpose of teaching… to change learners into members of another culture, but to make them part of the group who see themselves as mediators, able to compare, juxtapose and analyse" (Byram & Feng, 2004, p. 164).

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[1] I use the term ESL because this is the term that the school and focal participant used to describe the program.

Community of Practice

Wenger (1998) reaffirmed social participation in learning and expanded learning "not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities" (p. 4, emphasis original). Therefore, learning is part of daily life within various communities that have their own expectations and norms. According to Wenger (2000), communities collectively define what competence looks like, and newcomers may not know how to operate within the often unspoken boundaries of their new communities. However, brokers can connect communities and introduce new aspects of one community to another (Wenger, 1998). A broker's job "involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives" (p. 109), but Wenger (1998) also described the "uprootedness" of brokering (p. 110). In other words, for brokers to effectively move between and among communities, they must balance their associations to neither be fully members nor to be rejected by any community. Wenger (1998) wrote that "[brokers'] contributions lie precisely in being neither in nor out" (p. 110). In this paper, I use the term community of practice to refer to the school in general. Although I acknowledge that there are other potential communities within the school, my focus is on how ESL instruction can allow students to become members of the school in order to participate in beneficial learning opportunities.

Other studies have focused attention on students as they navigate their communities of practice but do not explore how the actions of the broker can make navigating easier (see Swain & Deters, 2007). Norton (2001) analyzed data on two learners who "withdrew entirely from participation in their ESL classrooms" (p. 160) and showed the discomfort of students speaking to members or gatekeepers of the communities they are trying to enter. She argued, "If we do not acknowledge the imagined communities of the learners in our classrooms, we may exacerbate their non-participation" (170). While it is relevant to focus attention on the students themselves, it is also important to see how teachers can become brokers who mediate between communities and assist students as they attempt to participate within the school community.

Interculturality

Byram (1997) defined intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence as the success of interactions between people including both communication through language and also "the establishing and maintenance of human relationships" (pp. 32-33). He defined broad categories of skills that lead to intercultural competence, including "skills of interpretation and establishing relationships between aspects of the two cultures" and "skills of discovery and interaction" (p. 33). He further defined aspects of interaction which he called *savoirs*. He defined knowledge as the comprehension of culture and social groups in diverse countries[2] and attitudes as the ability to analyze from the viewpoint of others and decenter from pre-conceived notions. He further defined the skills of interpreting and relating as the abilities to draw upon knowledge to interpret artifacts. He defined the skill of discovery as the "skill of building up specific knowledge as well as an understanding of the beliefs, meanings and behaviours which are inherent in particular phenomena" and the ability to "recognise significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations, and their relationship to other phenomena" (p. 38). Finally, he defined interaction as the "ability to manage constraints [time and mutual perceptions and attitudes] in particular

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[2] Byram (1997) referred to countries to delineate cultural aspects because education system are generally organized by country. However, Byram (1997) also acknowledged the limitations of the label "countries" as "entities of linguistic and cultural allegiance" (p. 55).

circumstances with specific interlocutors" (p. 38). It is important to note that the skills of intercultural competence are needed in both *inter*cultural and *intra*cultural experiences. In other words, Byram (1997) noted that "an individual's experience of otherness of language and culture may be just as frequently in the role of "host" or recipient, as in the role of traveler and "guest"" (p. 41). Many schools within the United States are intracultural places for teachers partially because of high mobility but also because of the high diversity that already exists among students (Duff, 2015). Interculturality has therefore become a crucial skill for teachers in all learning environments and continues to be crucial within ESL. Walters, Garii, and Walters (2009) wrote that as a response to the high diversity in schools in the United States, "a host of multicultural educational programs and supports has been created. Many teacher-training programs require prospective teachers to take at least one course focusing on diversity, in which they develop a largely theoretical understanding of culture" (p. 152). While teacher education is one way to encourage intercultural competence, it "can in principle be acquired through experience and reflection, without the intervention of teachers and educational institutions" (Byram, 1997, p. 33). In this paper, I assume that interculturality can be acquired through lived experiences such as short and long-term transnational involvement (Menard-Warwick, 2008).

In this study, I use the term interculturality as opposed to intercultural (communicative) competence (Byram, 1997; Dervin, 2016). By using the term, I retain the idea that *inter*culturality involves intermediary positions between individuals and between groups both when acting as the "host" and as the "guest" (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013, p. 7; Byram, 1997, p. 41). However, the addition of the suffix -ality emphasizes that interculturality is "a process and something in the making" not necessarily having an end point (Dervin, 2016, p. 1). Instead it is dynamic and changing through diverse interactions and newly acquired skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

As stated previously, a majority of studies on interculturality have focused on foreign language. Completely separating foreign language and second language learning and teaching creates a false dichotomy since we can gain relevant data from both teaching contexts. However, the differences are still relevant to point out, and focusing on one over the other requires less qualifications and a more specific focus on the unique requirements of each context (Byram, 1997; Byram & Feng, 2004). Second language teaching, the focus of this study, is "the teaching of a language which is routinely spoken outside the classroom in the society in which the learner lives" (Byram, 1997, p. 4). Dytynyshyn and Collins (2012) pointed out that "teaching context may lead [second language] teachers to approach culture and interculturality somewhat differently than [foreign language] teachers with a greater focus on cultural adaptation and cultural comparisons" (p. 6). Dytynyshyn and Collins (2012) pointed out that foreign language classrooms are often seen as the ideal location to promote intercultural competence but that second language classrooms also have the potential for the development of interculturality especially in "multiethnic classes where people from various backgrounds come together to learn a community language" (p. 2).

Other studies of interculturality in second language teaching have focused on teachers of adult learners. Menard-Warwick (2009) conducted interpretive case studies that explored how teachers and students co-constructed culture in their classroom through classroom discussions. She found that at times, the co-construction created tensions, or discursive faultlines, and that those tensions were important because "they index the cultural areas that need to be explored in order to work toward interculturality" (p. 30). However, teachers in the study rarely took advantage of the discursive faultlines. Menard-Warwick (2008) did a comparative case study on two teachers, one who lived California and the other in Chile, who both had significant transnational experiences that "helped them to develop intercultural competence and a meta-awareness of this competence" (p. 634). She explored how they

constructed their intercultural identities and how they used their intercultural experiences to approach cultural topics in their classrooms. Menard-Warwick (2008) concluded that "intercultural teachers have much to offer TESOL pedagogy" since they can use their intercultural experiences as tools to approach cultural topics (p. 616). Similarly, Dytynyshyn and Collins (2012) conducted a study in an adult ESL class in Montreal to explore how a teacher's approach to culture "promoted the development of interculturality" (p. 3). They found that within this second language context, "issues of cultural adaptation and cultural information about Canada were the most prominent" (p. 22). Finally, although Young & Sachdev (2011) called all of the instruction in their study English as a foreign language, they conducted an international mixed-methods study on the intercultural competence of teachers in various types of programs, including programs in the US and UK. They explored how teachers apply intercultural approaches in their language teaching and found that although teachers generally thought intercultural approaches would be appropriate, they did not actually use them in practice because of "lack of learner interest, a lack of curricular support, a lack of suitable textbook material, a lack of ICC [intercultural communicative competence] testing, and concern about engaging with controversy" (p. 95).

These previous studies point to the importance of teachers' interculturality and willingness to use it in ESL contexts. However, one of the only suggestions for improving intercultural competence is through teacher preparation. Several studies have focused on how to infuse teacher education programs with opportunities to confront issues of diversity and to form interculturality, like introducing culturally responsive teaching strategies into teacher training (Frederick et al., 2010), demonstrating the benefits and results of study abroad programs (Walters et al., 2009), and providing other options for short term "international" assignments within teachers' own communities (Ference & Bell, 2010). These types of teacher training are necessary since many pre-service teachers continue to be white, middle class females who "do not see themselves as ready for a multicultural classroom" (Ference & Bell, 2010; Walters et al., 2009, p. 151). However, it is also important to remember that teacher identity construction is a "deeply ingrained" and lifelong process that weaves together personal and professional factors (Duff & Uchida, 1997, p. 476). Teachers come to the classroom with cultural backgrounds that are relevant to explore (Alsup, 2006) and many lived experiences outside of formal education that can lead teachers to build interculturality (Menard-Warwick, 2008). Teachers can harness both the personal and professional factors that make up their identity and use them when appropriate and effective within classroom situations (Morgan, 2004). It is therefore important to view how teachers' lived experiences play a key role in their development of interculturality instead of solely focusing on teacher education.

Aims of the Study

With this study, I specifically focus on the role of teacher as broker to help newcomer students interact and contribute within the school's community of practice (Duff, 2015; Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998, 2000). Interculturality may help teachers as they mediate not only between communities but also the cultures and languages tied to those communities. This study explores the lived experiences of one ESL teacher, how she became a member of her own communities of practice, and how in turn, those skills helped her act as a broker for her students to be able to gain access and have a voice within the dominant culture of school. This study explores how she used intercultural skills to understand and bridge between her students' unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds and the specific competences that students would need to become more fully integrated into the school. My goal is not to assess specific aspects of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997) but instead to trace the narrative of how transnational experiences affect interculturality (Menard-Warwick, 2008) and to show how

interculturality is beneficial to ESL instruction with elementary students as a way to work toward equitable education for diverse students. My research questions include:

- How did Lidia overcome the primary challenges in crossing cultural boundaries?
- How did Lidia develop her intercultural skills?
- How does Lidia incorporate her intercultural skills into her teaching practices?

Methods

This study is qualitative in nature to allow for the exploration of the complexities in sociocultural identity and language learning and teaching, none of which are static processes that could be easily measured by statistical analysis (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton Peirce, 1995). Recent studies have used "ethnographic observational and interview-based case studies," which are relevant qualitative methods within studies of identity and language learning and teaching (see Duff, 2015, p. 62). Duff (2015) wrote that ethnographic case study "has the potential to reveal, with sufficient contextualization and detail, the practices, ideologies, tensions, contingencies, and dilemmas that a small number of selected transnational individuals and families may face in their lives in connection with language" (p. 62). Ethnographic case study is particularly beneficial for this study because of the need to use a method that allows a close examination of cultural processes (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Furthermore, case study allows the focus to be on a specific context, in this case one teacher,[3] allowing me to find relationships between my informant's narrative and her role in teaching ESL to her elementary school students (Menard-Warwick, 2008).

Participant

Lidia[4] worked within a pull-out ESL program in a small city in the southern portion of the United States. I recruited Lidia through personal contact with the school district and chose Lidia based on her reputation as an effective instructor and based on her experience teaching, which was ten years at the time the study was conducted. I also chose Lidia because of her cross-cultural experiences; she had lived in two countries for extended periods of time: Romania for more than 30 years and the United States for more than 20 years at the time of the study. Moreover, she also had an intercultural marriage and often traveled to other countries, both adding to her experiences of diverse cultures (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Byram, 1997). Most importantly, I chose Lidia because of her willingness to reflect on her cross-cultural and linguistic experiences. I received written permission to interview and observe from Lidia and her school system as well as from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Context

In Lidia's pull-out ESL program, the students were placed in general education classrooms and only pulled out for short amounts of time (González, 2008). The students' proficiency levels were based on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) test scores, including the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test and WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT; González, 2008;

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[3] The classroom in this context is different from most classrooms since students are pulled out of their larger classrooms throughout the day to attend ESL sessions either individually or with a small group of other students. A further description is provided in the "context" section.
[4] A pseudonym that Lidia chose for herself.

WIDA, 2014). For students to exit the ESL program in Lidia's district, they needed a score of 4.8 on the ACCESS test (Lidia, Pre-Observation). Lidia followed the TESOL standards to guide her curriculum and instruction (TESOL International Association, 2010). However, the pull-out program model made Lidia's context quite unique from other ESL contexts because instead of working with large groups for extended periods of time, Lidia works with one to four students for about 30 to 40 minutes per session depending on their level and social and intellectual needs. Lidia pulled out lower proficiency students (level 1-2 students) each day and higher proficiency students (level 3 and some level 4 students) two or three times weekly. Level 4 students were usually pulled out when there was a specific concern, but Lidia also pulled them out at times "to let them know that somebody cares, or that somebody holds them accountable" (Lidia, Pre-Observation). Lidia specifically pulled out students together when she thought they would form a cooperative group to help one another learn and communicate in their home language, English, or a combination of both.

Data Collection

I interviewed Lidia about her cross-cultural narrative and the struggles she faced as well as about her school schedule, her curriculum, and her motivations for her teaching practices. I interviewed Lidia three times before I observed her classes and once after I completed observations, each interview lasting about 45 minutes. I chose to use an informant interview that "allows the interviewee room to contribute to the agenda" (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 88). This method allowed Lidia to control the data, which in turn hopefully reduced the author's bias (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). I told Lidia the interviews were to explore what it meant being an immigrant and crossing cultural boundaries and to better understand her teaching philosophy. I also told her about the method of recording to make sure she was comfortable (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interviews were conducted in Romanian and English, and each interview was audio recorded and transcribed.

I also observed Lidia at school for 19 hours in the first weeks of the school year. I specifically chose the beginning of the year so that I could see her interact both with former students as well as new students, some of whom had just emigrated to the US. By observing Lidia's classes, I detected which methodologies she used and what cultural topics she or her students chose to discuss. It was not feasible to record classroom sessions because Lidia was in constant movement to pull students out from their classes, to visit students in the lunchroom or classrooms, to allow students to move around the classroom during instruction (i.e., to point, to stand, to do total physical response activities), to take students to the library or show them around the school building, etc. Constantly moving a recording device around would have been too great of a distraction for me as well as Lidia and her students, and it would have been a constrain on my ability to fully observe events. Therefore, structured field notes were vital to the quality of observation notes, including keeping track of date, place, and sequential time of observed occurrences and direct quotes when possible (Angrosino, 2007). I used a specific form during each observation with those categories (date, place, time, and observed occurrences) and wrote down both general notes and direct quotes. I also had access to teaching materials that Lidia largely created herself as well as the grade-level books that she got from the library and WIDA materials.

Data Analysis

The validity of the findings in this ethnographic case study were increased by using analytic induction, or finding emerging patterns in the data (Flick, 2007, as cited in Angrosino, 2007, p. 59). To find themes and patterns in the interviews and field notes, I added descriptive

coding to identify narrative passage topics, and I included memos of initial analytical impressions after each interview and observation (Saldaña, 2009; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). In order to address the first question, coding focused on challenges that Lidia expressed, such as feelings of otherness (i.e., feeling alone or feeling like she did not belong) and language learning and use. To address the second question, coding focused on themes of Lidia's cross-cultural experiences and reflections, such as friendship, travel, and cultural comparisons. To address the third question, coding focused on Lidia teaching students from diverse backgrounds. I coded interculturality in interview responses about teaching and observed classroom interactions when Lidia applied aspects of Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence as described previously (i.e., knowledge of student's home culture/language, attitude, discovery, and interpretation). While coding, I noted that a large number of intercultural instances related to teaching were also instances when Lidia was explicitly explaining what I initially labeled as "school culture." I later defined these instances as brokering (Wenger, 1998).

Role of the Researcher

Lidia and I shared similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds since we are both immigrants from the same region of Romania and non-native speakers of the languages that we speak on a daily basis and/or teach: English and Spanish. These similarities helped me build rapport as well as understand many cultural and linguistic references about Romania and immigration without the need for extensive explanations. However, I have acknowledged during the entirety of this research that Lidia's experiences are different from mine especially due to the fact that she immigrated as an adult and spent a majority of her life in Romania while I was a child and have spent a majority of my life in the United States.

Findings

In the findings sections, I will explore Lidia's experiences in her new communities of practice such as family, church, and higher education. I will then explore how Lidia's experiences have led her to act as a broker in her elementary school to assist students who are crossing their own cultural boundaries and learning how to be participants in their new community of practice at school.

New Communities of Practice and Uprootedness

Lidia immigrated to the United States from Romania when she was 35, leaving behind many cultural aspects that were imperative to her sense of identity, like relationships and career knowledge. In Romania, Lidia was an only child, making her relationship with her parents essential to her identity, and she was a successful head pharmacist and chemistry professor, so she also valued her professional relationships and the knowledge that made her adept in her field. When she moved to the US, Lidia gave up her career and her closeness to her parents but gained other new experiences that helped her grow in her new intercultural identity, like learning new cooking styles, new language skills, and new professional skills within her new communities of practice. She not only learned the southern nuances of English but also started speaking Spanish, and in her professional life, Lidia completed a Master's degree in human resources and chose a job teaching ESL in the local public schools. Her new career path suited Lidia because she thought she could empathize with the students since she was an immigrant herself. Through interacting with students and parents as well as through traveling to various states and countries, Lidia learned about other languages/dialects and other people around the

world. Lidia expressed an "uprootedness" in her experiences as she felt a sense of loss as well as a growing sense of belonging even though she continued to feel like she did not quite belong in her new communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 110). Lidia's narrative demonstrated continued feelings of otherness after losing parts of her former cultural identity. Very often when she talked about Romania, she used the verb *a părăsi* ("to desert") as if she were disloyal to her culture.

> *Am fost puţin tristă pentru că fiind singurul copil am trebuit sa- îmi las părinţii în România, şi să îmi părăsesc serviciului că farmacista şefă.*
> (I was a little sad because being an only child, I had to leave my parents in Romania, and I deserted/left my job as a head pharmacist). (Lidia, Interview 1)

Lidia equated leaving Romania with leaving part of her identity behind as she deserted relationships that she took pride in. She left behind personal relationships, like her parents, and professional relationships, like those at her pharmacy. As Lidia compared Romania and the United States, she reminisced about relationships and interactions between people. For example, she recalled knowing many intimate details about others in Romania, and she felt that same need in the US.

> *Am simţit nevoie aceasta de apropia la oamenilor cum eram noi în România obişnuiţi, deşi noi eram prea apropiaţi de fapt în Români, că prea ştiam tot unul despre altul.*
> (I felt that need to get close to people, how we were used to it in Romania…. Maybe we were too close in Romania because we knew too much about others).
> (Lidia, Interview 1)

Lidia decentered to critique her own Romanian culture and observe the perhaps adverse effects of relationships (Byram, 1997). However, these relationships were still part of the identity she wanted to maintain. When Lidia first moved to the US and tried building new relationships, cultural challenges such as cooking and technology left her feeling distant from others in her new communities. Lidia tried to fit into her new social world, but she often identified as a "foreigner" within social contexts. For example, she said about her Master's program,

> *Eu erau din nou singura străina acolo. Toţi erau americani.*
> (I was again the only foreigner there. Everyone was American). (Lidia, Interview 1)

Lidia also used other metaphors to imply that she did not belong, and through her metaphors, Lidia explored how inappropriate her behavior seemed and how she did not fit into her new communities. When describing her experience at church, she equated herself with a zoo animal.

> *Erau singura străină de la biserica… eram ca un animal la grădină zoologică cum se uitau la mine.*
> (I was the only foreigner in the church… I was like an animal in the zoo from the way they looked at me). (Lidia, Interview 1)

The strong metaphor "zoo animal" may imply that Lidia felt trapped or enclosed while others peered in to observe her behavior, perhaps deciding whether she was an insider or an imposter in their community. Another metaphor she used was an alien.

> *Toţi sau uitat la mine. Au crezut că sunt extraterestru.*
> (Everybody looked at me. They thought I was an extraterrestrial). (Lidia, Interview 1)

The image of an extraterrestrial gives the impression of being completely disconnected from the way of life in her new communities. Again, Lidia described being observed; within her new communities such as higher education and church, she seemed aware that others watched her cultural performance maybe to see if she would act appropriately. Even when she tried building new relationships to replace those she "deserted" in Romania, she felt like an outsider.

One of the challenges that accompanied Lidia's feeling of uprootedness described above came from not knowing how to complete "basic" skills according to US standards, such as cooking, particularly in the South, and using readily-available technology in her professional life. Lidia sought help from new friends who unfortunately made her feel like an outsider with their surprise at her lack of "basic" knowledge. One example happened when Lidia inquired about making cornbread. She knew how to make the Romanian version of the dish, but she did not know the US recipe, so she asked a friend.

> *Cînd am întrebat pe [ea] cum face* cornbread*, mămăligă noastră Românească, ia a rîs să moara pentru că este ceva foarte normal, deci ca şi cum poţi să ceri o reţetă aşa de comun?*
> (When I asked [her] how to make cornbread, like our Romanian *mămăligă*, she laughed hysterically because this was something so normal, like how can you possibly ask for a recipe so common?). (Lidia, Interview 1)

Lidia took steps toward building a new cultural identity within her new communities by asking her new friends for help, but she often felt like an outsider. She incorporated new societal norms such as cooking, but the process was slow.

Another factor that challenged Lidia's ability to fit in was her limited knowledge of technology. She had never used some of the most common technological items of daily life in the US, which led to uprootedness in professional relationships. When Lidia enrolled in her Master's program for human resources, she hoped to learn from her relationships with classmates and professors about workplace expectations. However, the road to cultural proficiency continued to be arduous. In her first class, she had to write a research paper, and Lidia asked how to find information. According to Lidia, everyone else in the class looked at her like she was crazy, probably thinking, "Ce vrea să spună asta?" (What is this lady trying to say?). Her professor simply told her to use the internet. What may have been a clear answer for anyone with a high school diploma or undergraduate degree from the US was no help for Lidia. She thought,

> *Unde pe internet? .. Asta era o carte? Mă duc la biblioteca sau unde?*
> (Where on the internet? … Was this a book? Do I go the library or where?).
> (Lidia, Interview 1)

Lidia continued to build professional relationships with her classmates and professors in her educational community of practice but again felt like an outsider because of her lack of "basic" knowledge and again felt observed and judged. When she was in Romania, her job as head pharmacist made her an important part of society while in the US she lacked professional adeptness. However, during challenging times like those previously mentioned, Lidia continued to learn from those around her and continued to participate in daily life and to build relationships within her new cultural context. She gained new knowledge, attitudes, and

discovery skills (Byram, 1997). For example, when she did not know how to cook, she asked for help and was willing to take on a new Southern persona, cooking cornbread in a new way instead of the Romanian way. To fit into her Southern persona, Lidia even took on new language features and during the English part of the interviews, for example, consistently used the expressions "ya'll," "folks," and "fixin' to." Moreover, Lidia learned to decenter (Byram, 1997). She often analyzed people's actions from their perspectives instead of judging them from her own. She demonstrated critical cultural awareness as she continually interpreted and evaluated cultural practices in Romania and in the US. These types of intercultural skills that she acquired through her experiences have served her as a teacher to students who are crossing cultural boundaries. Moreover, her position of uprootedness, while emotionally difficult for Lidia, has placed her in a position where she can act as a broker for her students at school (Wenger, 1998). Lidia has realized that she lost pieces of her former identity in order to build new identities and new relationships in the US in her new communities of practice. Therefore, with her students, she does not focus solely on acculturating them to US standards but includes students' backgrounds in curriculum to give them a voice and a sense of a multicultural identity. Lidia also knows what it is like to be unfamiliar with "basic" knowledge, so she explicitly shares relevant knowledge about the school's community of practice with her students (Wenger, 2000). As previously mentioned, Lidia chose a career in ESL because she could identify with the situations of her students. She could use the skills she learned through her own narrative to assist those who go through similar cross-cultural situations and must adjust to new communities of practice. The following examples of conversations between Lidia and her students illustrate how she created an intercultural environment. Of course, these instances are not a comprehensive representation of her teaching strategies, but they show examples of how she explicitly demonstrated to students the expectations of the school's community of practice while simultaneously encouraging them to form cross cultural identities by valuing their home languages and cultures.

Students develop personal and professional relationships at school, making it one of the most relevant communities of practice for them. A community of practice, like Lidia's school, does not just have unique language but its own expectations, and Lidia could anticipate the students' language needs and other factors that would allow them to participate effectively at school. Lidia used the elements of her students' backgrounds and included them in her curriculum where she introduced the students to the school's community of practice. In this manner, the students could become members while not losing previous cultural and linguistic knowledge. Lidia's ESL students may not have specific or abnormal problems fitting in, but according to Lidia one of the issues is "for them to get to know other students… many times they just feel like an outcast" (Lidia, Pre-observation). These problems escalate because they may not know the cross-cultural expectations. Lidia stated, "It adds more stress to the student because they don't know how to behave. They are scared. They are lonely…. They can't communicate" (Lidia, Pre-observation). Lidia addressed these concerns in her curriculum. For example, on the first day of school, Lidia encountered a new Korean student who had just started school in the US and got separated from her class. Lidia walked with the student through the library and pointed out objects, repeating "Fish. Fish…" as they looked in the library's fish tank. "1 fish, 2 fish, 3 fish…." Lidia continued. The student started counting on her own to 10 in English. "Book, book, book…. how many books? 5. Computer. Chair. Blue. Blue…." Lidia continued as they walked. The small act of pointing out each object was an initiation into school vocabulary. Although so simple, Lidia was actually showing the student where to find objects in the library and what these objects were called. Moreover, this interaction encouraged the student to speak the English she knew, counting to 10 on her own. Lidia also taught the student some basic expectations at her new school, like how to greet people in the hallway. Lidia stated, "When I see you in the hall, I say helloooooo! (Lidia modeled a wave) And you

say helloooo! (Lidia continued waving)" (Observation Notes). Something as simple as not waving to a teacher or fellow student can be misconstrued as rude in the school community, which in turn keeps students from forming relationships. The next morning, the student waved at Lidia when they saw each other in the hall (Observation notes).

Another aspect that Lidia explicitly addressed with the students was how to head their papers. According to Lidia, there are cultural differences in writing the date which she explicitly discussed with her students.

> In Europe you have… the day, month, and year. In the Asian world you have the year, month, day so they have to learn, you know, how the date is... structured here. And then we work on the days of the week because in the majority of countries in the world, the week begins with Monday…. It's a lot. It incorporates a lot of skills. (Lidia, Post Observation)

Lidia had knowledge about the students' language and culture, knowing how each of her students would write the date in their former community of practice. She never implied that those ways of writing the date were inappropriate or wrong but instead decentered to view this cultural norm from both perspectives and included both perspectives into her curriculum.

Many behaviors, such as waving or writing the date, are overlooked in instruction because they are such common practices in schools in the US. Explicitly stating these expectations, however, allow newcomers to feel a sense of belonging as they interact with teachers and classmates in their new community of practice. Lidia knew what was it like to be a newcomer to her communities of practice, and she used her intercultural skills to learn about the background of the students and use the knowledge, along with much patience and empathy, to focus on small details, in turn giving students power to participate in their classes and school activities without making them feel like their previous knowledge was "wrong."

Encouraging Students to Use Their Voice Within the Dominant Community

Lidia goes to much effort to learn about her students. When walking into Lidia's classroom, the eyes are immediately drawn to the bookcase that runs along the entire back wall. Among the many WIDA Model boxes are Spanish textbooks, an Arabic workbook, multiple bilingual dictionaries including Korean, Spanish, and German, a picture dictionary, a poster of the Korean alphabet, and a Norway travel guide. These small details show Lidia's appreciation for the students' home cultures and languages. Even through conversations, it is obvious that Lidia knows about the students' backgrounds and their families. If she does not know, she asks. In fact, Lidia constantly asked questions and listened to stories. According to Lidia,

> Whatever we talk about, I want [the students] to extract the words from their own experiences. I want them to understand, and I want always to dip into their background... it makes them feel like they are themselves. They don't lose their identity the way I felt when I came here because nobody really cared about my own experience in my previous life. (Lidia, Post Observation)

Because of her own cross-cultural experiences, Lidia knew what it is like to lose parts of her identity in the process of trying to fit into new communities. Through the use of stories, multicultural images, and the students' home languages, Lidia connected with the students on a personal level. More importantly, these factors encouraged students to speak and be confident in their multicultural, multilingual identities instead of quietly acculturating to their new context and losing their former selves.

One way that Lidia encouraged students to speak and be confident in their identities is by encouraging them to share personal stories. Some of the stories seemed relevant to the curriculum while others just helped students express themselves in English. Either way, Lidia listened and often extracted intercultural meaning, even when discursive faultlines occurred (Menard-Warwick, 2009). Lidia had students from different countries[5] who often thought negatively of each other's country. However, she brought them together by pulling them out as a group and allowing them to speak openly. She said, "I'm not trying to force them... but I know that sooner or later they can get along, and they learn that "Hmmm maybe that country isn't as bad as I heard about it'" (Lidia, Post Observation). Lidia seemed comfortable allowing cultural topics to materialize, but she focused on positive cultural aspects while encouraging students to share opinions and listen to others. Even with younger students, opportunities for discursive faultlines appeared. During a conversation with two young Latino boys who Lidia pulled out together, a discussion about gender roles occurred while one student discussed a personal story about his mother. He said his mother was sad because his father did not buy him new shoes. Lidia explained that his parents work hard to earn money, and the boy replied in a surprised tone that his mother does not work. Lidia responded, "Oooo she works hard. What does she do at home?" The student then explained how she takes care of the baby. Because the students were quite young, they did not necessarily have their own life experiences from which to form complex cultural analyses. However, they seemed to emulate what they experienced at home, at school, or in the media, giving them a base from which to start forming independent opinions. While saying that his mom does not work, the student's statement and tone of voice implied that his definition of "work" included leaving the house to go to a job for which one gets paid. Although it was a short, simple conversation, Lidia did not bypass the opportunity to create a discursive faultline and encourage the student to think critically about gender roles from different perspectives (Menard-Warwick, 2009).

Lidia also used images, videos, and the students' home language to establish an intercultural environment. Some images and videos visually portrayed US cultural factors while others helped connect the students' home cultures to the lesson. For example, she was working with another new Korean student who was very talkative in Korean. She chose a lesson that would initiate him into the school culture, and at first attempted to ask questions about objects in the classroom and translate the questions using Google translate. The student continued to answer in Korean as Lidia nodded, smiled, and said "Oh ok" to all of his statements even though she did not speak Korean. Lidia then used another technique to get him to speak English – she looked up two videos of Korean schools, one narrated in Korean and the other in English. She asked him, "Is this like your school in Korea?" as the video played a song in Korean. Lidia continued, "They eat food" as the students in the video were eating their school lunches. The student than started using words in English, saying "Food. Food. Hungry…. Lunch!" Lidia continued to name objects in the video, like "They watch TV" as the student also started pointing out objects. They continued watching the videos and pointing out classroom objects together, and the student continued speaking mostly Korean but also used some English words. At the end of the Korean video, the student sang along with the Korean students, and Lidia smiled and nodded to the beat. Even though Lidia did not understand Korean, she continued smiling and saying "mhmmm" trying to catch every English word the student said. While at first the student spoke only Korean and no English, the videos encouraged him to use both. Perhaps it was seeing the images of a school building and students that were familiar to him that allowed him open up and use his English. Moreover, Lidia's constant encouragement through her nods and smiles gave positive reinforcement and made

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[5] As stated previously, I acknowledge that naming countries is only one way to describe students' cultural and linguistic identities. However, it is the way that Lidia (and others in the school) described the students, so I continue using my participant's terminology.

the student feel secure and understood no matter what language he used. She never told him to stop using Korean but instead encouraged him to use whatever linguistic tools he had to express his ideas.

For most of the students' languages, Lidia knew a few words but not enough to communicate, so she asked students to translate or explain in whatever language they wanted to use. She even added keyboards to her iPad so that students could type in their own languages. For example, a Korean student with fairly high proficiency was explaining a book that she read over the summer but got stuck explaining the word "incarcerated." Lidia wanted the girl to continue the story, though, so they looked up the word in the dictionary. Lidia added the Korean keyboard so her student could look up the word, never allowing language barriers to keep her from understanding the student or allowing the student to express herself. This in turn allowed the student to learn new vocabulary, and it allowed Lidia to introduce the cultural factors of children's chores and allowances in the US. Because Lidia encouraged the student to continue talking, a cultural discussion eventually came up. Like in the other examples, Lidia never mentioned that the student's way of life was inappropriate but instead shared some ways that children's life in the US may be different. In the examples presented in this paper, there was a combination of respect toward the students' home cultures as well as information about US cultural factors. This balance of home and US cultures allowed students to maintain their multicultural identities because their home cultures were a relevant part of the curriculum, and they could maintain that part of their identity as they learned new aspects about the US.

Conclusion

After her move to the US, Lidia managed to grow through new experiences, such as cooking and using technology, although she left behind pieces of her former self, including relationships she cherished. Through the process, however, she learned to decenter to understand the perspectives of her new friends, co-workers, and students. Consequently, she used those skill such as discovery and relating in her teaching. Norton (2013) wrote, "It is only by understanding the histories and lived experiences of language learners that the language teacher can create conditions that will facilitate social interaction both in the classroom and in the wider community, and help learners claim the right to speak" (p. 139). A teacher like Lidia who has struggled with crossing cultural boundaries may better relate to students who are going through the process themselves. Lidia decentered to understand her students' perspectives and empowered the students to balance their multicultural, multilingual identities while creating meaningful opportunities for them to practice English and behaviors of the school community of practice. Lidia found strategies to maintain conversations, not allowing language barriers to keep the students from understanding or speaking. In fact, even when she did not understand, she still smiled and nodded in reaction. Using methods such stories, languages, and images seemed to make students want to speak even more. Through these conversations, opportunities came up to discuss cultural elements and behaviors, including discursive faultlines. Although the cultural conversations were not very complex, they helped students think critically about cultural elements and make comparisons. Through these conversations, Lidia encouraged students to balance their multicultural, multilingual identities and to speak.

Discussion

One of the aims of this ethnographic case study was to explore how Lidia overcame the challenges she experienced and the intercultural skills she gained by crossing cultural boundaries. The findings mainly focused on her transnational move from Romania to the United States, where she became part of new communities of practice such as family, church,

and higher education. By crossing cultural boundaries and participating in new communities of practice, Lidia learned how to discover new cultural information in order to create knowledge and in turn interpret and relate to people from their perspectives instead of her own (Byram, 1997). However, even with interculturality, Lidia continued to feel that she did not quite belong fully to her new communities, leading her to a position of uprootedness that helped her to act as a broker for her students (Wenger, 1998). Another aim of this study was to explore how the intercultural skills that Lidia gained through her cross-cultural experiences helped her as she worked with diverse students. The findings revealed that Lidia helped students access and have a voice within the dominant culture of school by showing them not only how to be part of their new community of practice at school but also including many aspects the students' home languages and cultures within curriculum and allowing students to express themselves in whatever languages and methods (such as using dictionaries and international keyboards) that they wanted to use. Lidia's example shows that the goal of ESL teaching is not necessarily to teach students culture but to understand their lived experiences and interact with them by using interculturality (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013) to demonstrate that their experiences (i.e., knowledge, values, languages) are a valuable asset in school.

This study concurred with Duff and Uchida (1997) and Menard-Warwick (2008) supporting their findings that teacher identities are deeply ingrained and that biographical and cross-cultural experiences affect teaching practices, especially in ESL where students come from diverse backgrounds about which teachers must learn. This study emphasized that interculturality is not necessarily something to learn in a classroom or through short term experiences, although these have been shown to improve intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Ference & Bell, 2010; Frederick et al., 2010; Walters et al., 2009). Lidia was never formally taught about the culture of the United States but instead learned through real-life and extended intercultural experiences of both moving to a new country as well as traveling to other locations and listening to her students.

This study concurred with Menard-Warwick (2009) that students and teachers co-construct learning through interactions. However, in contrast to the teachers in Menard-Warwick's study, Lidia was comfortable with discursive faultlines and even started discussions of discursive faultlines. Also, unlike the teachers in Menard-Warwick's (2009) study who did not make "much effort to ask the students in-depth questions about their countries" (p. 42), Lidia was constantly asking questions, not necessarily about national culture or countries but about their lived experiences. She then included those in her curriculum when possible.

This study concurred with Dytynyshyn and Collins (2012), supporting that a large aspect of ESL teaching is cultural adaptation. Lidia specifically assisted students to know more about the community of practice of the school so that they could participate in order to further their learning opportunities. However, teaching interculturally for Lidia did not mean *only* helping students adapt to new culture but also mediating between cultures and communities to help students form cross-cultural or *inter*cultural identities (Byram & Feng, 2004; Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013).

This study added to knowledge about communities of practice, demonstrating that we must see the whole school as a community, not just for teachers building a professional identity but for everyone involved. There are many expectations and competences that make one a member or an outsider, such as those stated in this study. Since teachers generally know these competences, they can explicitly acknowledge them to students while also valuing the knowledge that the students bring with them. Although there are competencies within the community of practice at school that students should know in order to participate, these are not the *only* competencies that are relevant to the students; students are also part of other communities outside of school with valuable information to bring into the school setting. When it comes to working with diverse students, interculturality assists teachers to act as brokers to

both value and understand students' knowledge and skills as well as explicitly provide information about the new community of practice that students are now involved in.

As Menard-Warwick (2008) stated, with the large diversity in schools "there is no all-encompassing solution to the problems of intercultural pedagogy" (p. 636). Instead, teachers should be willing to continuously decenter, learn, and be open and accepting of new experiences that their students bring to class; each year and each new student bring languages and cultures to the class, and teachers have the responsibility to welcome those cultural aspects, learn about them, and use them within the classroom in order to encourage diverse students to find their voice within the dominant culture of school. Let us not forget that students' background knowledge and lived experiences are assets just as valuable to the classroom as the new information that the students will learn as they participate in the school community of practice.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is limited to the beginning of a school year. Longitudinal data would be relevant to see how the relationships and curriculum progress throughout the schoolyear and how teachers like Lidia continue using interculturality in instruction. This study was also focused on an ESL teacher within a pull-out environment in elementary school, which may not represent other ESL contexts with larger groups of students and longer class sessions. Finally, this study focused on a teacher's interactions with her students during ESL sessions. However, more research is needed on how intercultural teaching practices like the ones in this study affect diverse elementary students outside of ESL (i.e., interculturality in their general education classes and/or extracurricular activities).

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