

**М.Ю. Приходько**  
**Университет Де Поля, Чикаго, США**

## **«Я СУЩЕСТВУЮ В ЧУЖОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ»: ДИАЛОГ СО СТУДЕНТАМИ ИЗ РАЗНЫХ СТРАН**

*Риторика больше не была для меня чужой.  
Но наши отношения нуждались в сообществе, в  
котором можно было бы процветать.  
Lauer [1999, p. 10]*

**Аннотация.** Исследования в области преподавания иностранных языков являются насегодняшний день, при учете постоянно увеличивающегося уровня миграции, последствием которой является необходимость надлежащей интеграции мигрантов, акроме этого на фоне развивающихся международных отношений, очень актуальными.

Преподавание иностранных языков является молодой дисциплиной, вопросы и проблемы которой еще не полностью изучены, что открывает нам большие перспективы для дальнейших исследований в данной области. Проблема применения документального фильма в рамках урока иностранного языка расположена на границе педагогики и медиаведения. Объектом исследования в данной работе выступает документальный фильм в парадигме урока иностранного языка. В качестве предмета исследования взяты применение документального фильма на уроке иностранного языка, а также трудности применения документального кино в рамках урока иностранного языка.

**Ключевые слова:** интеграционный урок, урок иностранного языка, документальный фильм, медиа

**M. Yu. Prikhodko**  
**De Paul University, Chicago, USA**

## **«I EXIST IN A BORROWED SPACE»: ESTABLISHING A DIALOGUE WITH STUDENTS' CULTURES**

*Rhetorica was now no longer a stranger to me.  
But our relationship needed a community in which to  
flourish. Lauer [1999, p. 10]*

**Abstract.** Studies in the field of foreign language teaching are, at present, taking into account the ever-increasing level of migration, the consequence of which is the need for proper integration of migrants, and also against the background of developing international relations, very relevant.

Teaching foreign languages is a young discipline, the issues and problems of which have not yet been fully studied, which opens up great prospects for

further research in this area. The problem of using a documentary film as part of a foreign language lesson is located on the border of pedagogy and media studies. The object of the research in this paper is a documentary film in the paradigm of a foreign language lesson. The subject of the study is the use of a documentary film at a foreign language lesson, as well as difficulties of the use of documentary films in the framework of a foreign language lesson.

**Key words:** Integration lesson, a lesson of a foreign language, documentary, media.

In the essay *Getting to Know Rhetorica*, Lauer [1999] professed the ways she tried to embody her (professional) life with the crucial component of Rhetorica. During the first years of teaching, the concept was a stranger to her, "at times a distant suspicious figure, at times an overdressed clown" [p. 7], leaving a lot of her emotions and intentions unsaid, and haunted. After each class during that time, she felt betrayed and unsatisfied with the topics discussed, with the students' attempts to learn how to write in such settings. Yet, she had no clear idea how to challenge them. Lauer's (1999) brilliant quote made me deeply think about my whole enterprise of teaching English writing as translingual. What community should I create in my class, so that students would feel welcomed, and nurtured, but not as tortured and exhausted? In this essay I focus on establishing a dialogue of cultures: multilingual students' personal cultures/zones of emotional comfort and my ontological stances, as an international multilingual teacher. Dialogue of cultures is possible through prior unlearning of own epistemologies and values which Michael Byram defined in *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* [1997] and further extended to the principle of interculturality in teaching [Byram and Dervin, 2008]. Language, defined by Bakhtin [1981], complicates such dialogues in realities, because the matter hides not in grammatical but rather in ideological categories with "a maximum understanding in all spheres of ideological life" [p. 271].

In such classrooms, it seems vitally important to keep the door open to new modes of thinking and existing as a human being [Kramsch, 2009] as embedded in such spheres of ideological lives. In 2016, I had a chance to observe a multilingual writing class at a mid-sized public university in rural Pennsylvania, USA. Right after it, I happened to converse with a student from the class, Mike, that I left with the feeling as if he had said to me: "I exist in a borrowed space in the class." In defining this metaphor as crucial to challenge my understanding of my students' needs and realities, I turned to the essay *Transcultural Realities and Different Ways of Knowing* by Asante [2001], who called for regaining people's own ontological platforms, and cultural spaces to justify their understandings as valid as any others, and thus to fully participate in a multicultural society [p. 75].

Although, I am completely aware of how much

effort professors invest in trying to equip students with learning skills and epistemologies that they might need in the academic life, I am sure every student travels along this academic journey such not necessarily nurturing his/her own. What if they quest for different realities, strikingly divergent from the ones she expected them to offer? What if they embody their language and literacy practices with the meanings embedded in their life histories and experiences, also completely divergent from the ones she expected them to demonstrate?

Echoing Hurlbert [2013], I explore how to incarnate “the meaning of experience and creation, . . . of options and decisions, the meaning of being human in [their] equal searches for the meaning of [their] lives” (p. 19) in multilingual composition classes. By so doing, I try to explore where the dialogical principle of interculturality is.

### **Because THEY Say It Is Important**

“My students – then, as now – want to tell stories too – I mean, really, we all do – but they want me to listen,” reminded Wendy Bishop [1999, p. 29] about the importance of listening to students’ voices, as they are – but not as silenced by teachers’ instructions and beliefs. Here, I believe that teachers picture students as coal miners who could become trapped, or injured in a fraction of the second, so that they are in need of immediate help. They are pictured as those operating invalid modes of thinking, and writing, so that they are in need of immediate guidance. From such a Freireian position, students as empty vessels need to be filled [Freire, 2000] with writing skills required in the Western academia – but not as assets full of linguistic, discursive, and rhetorical idiosyncrasies.

Ontologically wise, every student does bring his/her treasure to the composition table: the ways of interacting with readership, of valuing knowledge from other languages, operating social practices [Connor, 2014], and engaging into language and literacy practices “with the person sitting in the next desk” [Hurlbert, 2013, p. 71]. However, back in reality, students keep fulfilling the goals set by their teachers who may be thinking hundreds of miles away from those students. True, teachers aim at covering a lot of topics, obsessively injecting traditional genres and rhetorical strategies into syllabi. To fulfill this goal, they need to provide forms and guidelines that seem to facilitate their subject explorations to be trendy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With support of Hurlbert [2013] some things, given to students to write about something seemingly necessary for the college level, fill in the empty space with artificial meanings in composition classes [p. 167]. Wait a minute. Why should they discover subjects not relevant or empty to them? What if instead they would pursue the journey to find their own rhetorical moves, styles, or even own processes of detailing the scene? Besides, they ought to know how other people think, and then compose (or think and compose).

Ronald [2003], as a writing teacher and researcher, delineated what students’ writings should

look like, or should ‘feel’ like. Having followed the pedagogical shift in teaching writing not as ‘product,’ but rather ‘process’ in the 1980s, she reemphasized what ‘style’ means and what each student has to say. The critical point was to problematize Plato and Aristotle being obsessed to hide true selves from the audience, thus trying to displace authenticity by sophistication. In response, Ronald becomes overtly interested in defining what style means through the students’ voices: “I call this “writing where somebody’s home,” as opposed to writing that’s technically correct, but where there’s “nobody home,” no life, no voice” [p. 197]. Later in the essay, she confesses that in old days she used to be more interested in topics more than in students’ ways of discovering them. I believe that is really hard to accept, but easy not to implement.

This snapshot from my composition classroom observations would help to illustrate my challenge:

*Due to the second major assignment for this class, students are expected to write a research paper about the topic related to tendencies of globalization. To make an argument, they need to cite at least seven scholarly sources, and thus follow MLA or APA guidelines.*

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*Today is our third class of working on the globalization paper. Students brought their research proposals and thematic ideas. Here is a short intro from my first conversation that day:*

*- Maria, what do you think I should write, if I want to write about education and globalization?*

*- Ok, let’s see. What is your main idea? I mean, what do you want to write about?*

*- I need to write about globalization. But I need to connect it with education.*

*- Mike, you don’t have to connect it right away. Just, write about education. What is your main point, by the way?*

*- It is how education in my country is different from US education, you know.*

*- Why do you have to include the word “globalization” in the title then?*

*- Maria, because the topic says so.*

In Ronald’s [2003] terms, Mike wanted to sound knowledgeable and proficient, simultaneously trying to keep his voice “at home.” What I noticed, instead, is that topic governed him with “paralyzing sense of powerlessness” [Gorzelsky, 2005, p. 11 in the Western academia. True, he had been trying to negotiate the way between his existing body of knowledge, and his ‘being-in-the-Western-academia’. However, I still wonder if his writing helped him understanding ‘the other’ world (Western educational system) as its recognized practitioner. I still wonder if his attitude to the mystified concept of education in two countries released his sense of freedom, and healed his ethnocentric wounds, instead of politicizing the subject.

With regards, the ‘other’ values system (in this case, Western academia) should not become an

axiom – like a principle of universe, but the reverse. For instance, Todorov [1984] complements the value of love and religion not as absolute (“assimilative”), rather as distributive, where each human being has own understanding of love and religion, and he/she has a right to believe in God that suits him [her] [p. 190]. From this perspective, if there is a need to compare the values, the starting point should be relations to these values, but not the substances themselves. Likewise, it is in teaching in intercultural setting, including writing or language. As teachers we should not assess or compare the subjects that students like to talk or write about, rather value their processes and relations to these subjects: what styles do they choose? What genres are, more likely, helpful to deliver the meaning? What rhetorical situation do they want to compose about? What geographies of writing/reading do they value?

Thus, every session is a new endeavor for teachers and students to keep classroom space authentic. For teachers, it might be about creating more possibilities for students to handle use of freedom, and to make a personal choice that would take them one more step closer to harmony with the world (no matter how cruel it might turn to be). This choice is a matter of mutual understanding, rather than of assimilation, or enforcement [Elizarova, 2008]. Hurlbert [2013] addressed this issue by inviting teachers to embrace a responsibility to teach students to express their strong opinions, and to encourage their exploration without disrupting students’ learning and languages spaces.

Consequently, the dialogue of cultures lives through unlearned privileges, ontological and epistemological interrogations that teachers openly unravel. The principle of interculturality starts within each teacher and transforms to every student. Thus, by allowing students craft personal learning spaces (experimental writings; language vignettes, literacy autobiographies, multimodal literacies), each of them may start feeling safe and sound, where his/her writing organically reflects the state of mind and soul. Instead of making students feel trapped in-between their majors and English writing classes, I see my classes in a Noah’s Ark form, which is transparent but solid in form and meaning, and where students would have space to let their learning flows (not necessarily linguistically but emotionally), and naturally transcend their lifespan literacy experiences.

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