

Sites for Discussion, Citizenship Education and Pathbuilding: Challenging the Fear of Controversy in the Adult EAL Classroom

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Abstract

This paper explores an integrated approach to citizenship education through English-as-an-Additional Language (EAL) instruction for adults who are new immigrants to Canada. Teaching for citizenship and participation in Canadian democratic processes sometimes involves discussing non-consensual issues such as same-sex unions, human rights, and religious freedoms. The result is discussions that can be fraught with conflict and tension, posing challenges and feelings of unease for teachers and learners. Therefore, an integrated approach to citizenship education also requires considering theories on dialogue and communicative engagement. Following a discussion on issues of citizenship education for newcomers to Canada and the possibilities of an integrated citizenship program, this paper concludes with a brief exploration of the work of Gloria Anzaldua and Susan Bickford for inspiration on ways to engage with non-consensual issues that pose challenges for EAL learners and teachers.

Introduction

Since the mid-twentieth century, the Canadian government has articulated various visions of citizenship education for new immigrants to Canada through language instruction in either English or French. The most recent iteration of citizenship education exists in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program where English-as-an-Additional Language (EAL) educators are expected to provide information on ‘Canadian values.’ This expectation is problematic, in part because the government does not provide definitions as to what constitutes citizenship education or Canadian values (Derwing & Thomson, 2005; Joshee & Derwing, 2005). The problematic of the situation is further compounded as evidenced by recent research which discusses EAL teachers feelings of inadequacy in teaching about issues related to citizenship (Derwing & Thomson, 2005) as well as their unease in engaging with the dissonance surfacing from discussing non-consensual issues (Pinet, 2006). Teaching for citizenship and participation in democratic institutions in Canada necessarily involves discussing non-consensual issues such as same-sex unions, human rights and religious freedom. The process of citizenship learning is further complicated in adult EAL classrooms in Canada where learners often come from various religious, ethnic, political, economic and linguistic backgrounds that influence their philosophical and social understandings of and positionings in society. In such a pluralistic environment, discussions engaging with non-consensual issues can be fraught with conflict, tension and unease.

Bickford (1996) explains that conflict arises from uncertainty, inequality and identity in pluralistic societies. Issues related to uncertainty, inequality and identity are all present in the EAL classroom. The process of migrating from one society to another is replete with

uncertainty, geographical and psychological disruptions (Epsin, 1997). Even though discourses in the national media and education systems posit Canada as a fair and equal society in the imaginary of the national psyche, new immigrants encounter various forms of inequality ranging from institutionalized racism (Bannerji, 2000) to a lack of recognition of professional credentials. With respect to identity, newcomers' subjectivities can be destabilized during the migration process and by coming into contact with others who see the world differently, calling into question the certainty of one's viewpoint or one's identity (Hall, 1991, 1996). Many EAL programs are developed from a communicative language teaching perspective, in which listening and speaking are a central focus (in addition to reading and writing) of language instruction. Therefore, the EAL classroom can be one of the few collective forums newcomers to Canada have to discuss at length and actively make sense of the migration experience and challenges of living in a society with potentially different values, political systems and social structures. Coming to understand and make meaning of these differences also involves learning to be a citizen within Canada's multicultural and democratic institutions. "Citizenship is not merely a legal status, but a practice that involves communicative engagement with others in the political realm" (Bickford, 1996, p. 11). Learners in a Canadian EAL classroom range from those who have lived for several years in refugee camps where democracy, citizenship and human rights were elusive concepts, to those who have lived in societies with well established democratic institutions and market economies. For some newcomers to Canada, the EAL classroom is one of their first opportunities to learn about Canadian laws and discuss the contentious aspects of citizenship and democracy. Teaching in the EAL classroom means engaging with an array of understandings and experiences of what constitutes citizenship and democratic processes. In the EAL classroom, differences in viewpoints can be source of conflict. Discussions, therefore, seldom reach consensus. The lack of consensus can cause legitimate feelings of unease for some learners and teachers.

Joshee (1996) pointed out that there has not been much scholarly attention paid to citizenship education for immigrants. Since this observation, there has been some discussion in the EAL community about how to proceed. Some suggestions include explicitly teaching 'Canadian values' (Courchene, 1996) while others suggest making citizenship learning optional for new immigrants (Derwing & Thomson, 2005). While there are valid considerations for such recommendations, in this article, I argue that discussions on citizenship happen both formally and informally in the EAL classroom. Whether EAL educators intentionally plan to teach citizenship concepts or not, citizenship issues enter the classroom through discussion because many new immigrants desire an opportunity to understand Canada's social and political fabric. Therefore, if the EAL community is to take the task of citizenship education seriously, beginning a conversation on theories of engaging with non-consensual issues through classroom discussion is necessary. This, however, also requires some foundational understanding of citizenship and citizenship education.

This article proceeds with an overview of citizenship education for new immigrants to Canada since World War II, highlighting some of the main issues. It then moves into a discussion of Schugurensky's (2006) proposal for an integrated approach to citizenship education as a possible program for the Canadian EAL classroom. While Schugurensky's approach aims for inclusivity, for it to be viable in the pluralistic, and sometimes conflictual context of the classroom, it also requires an engagement with theories of dialogue. Therefore, a synthesis of theories on dialogue in classroom settings is provided. While many of these theories marry the notion of dialogue with the classroom, I will use the terms "discussion" or "sites of

discussion” to refer to the EAL classroom. My reason for this is that dialogue is often conceived of as a deliberative action (Bickford, 1996) whereas communication in the EAL classroom does not necessarily take on a deliberative quality. If EAL teachers are to educate for citizenship, then ways of thinking through the challenging moments of classroom discussion are necessary. To this end, I conclude with a discussion on the ideas of Gloria Anzaldua and Susan Bickford, whose ideas on difference and citizenship serve as an inspiration for changing how dissonance through discussion is viewed in the EAL classroom.

The EAL Classroom and Citizenship

Prior to the 1940s, citizenship education for new immigrants to Canada was a voluntary endeavor resting in the hands of organizations such as churches and women’s groups. It was not until the end of World War II that the Canadian federal government began to take an interest in citizenship education while provincial governments were advocating for language education in English or French for newcomers to assist with labour market integration (Joshee, 1996). Through various agreements between the federal and provincial governments, citizenship education and language instruction became integrated beginning in the late 1940s and continued until 1967 (Joshee, 1996). In 1966, the White Paper on Immigration divided responsibility for immigrant integration between the Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State (Joshee, 1996). Despite agreements between the two departments to include citizenship instruction, the federal government focused its attention on supporting Manpower and Immigration in developing language training for employment purposes. Joshee (1996) explains that for the federal government “economic participation became the most important purpose associated with language instruction for immigrants” (p. 115). The trend of tying language instruction programs to labour market participation to the exclusion of citizenship education continued until the late 1980s. In 1992, however, the federal government initiated substantial changes to language education for new immigrants by developing the Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) program (Joshee & Derwing, 2005). One of the overriding goals of the program, still in existence, is to develop citizenship participation and to provide information on ‘Canadian values’, although exactly what constitutes Canadian values was never defined by the government (Derwing & Thomson, 2005; Joshee & Derwing, 2005). Defining citizenship and Canadian values has been left to the LINC providers and individual teachers (Derwing & Thomson, 2005), and government officials are under the impression that EAL teachers are providing the information necessary to participate in Canadian society (Joshee & Derwing, 2005).

Such an approach has led to inconsistent and ad hoc provisions of citizenship education. More often than not, EAL teachers tend to focus on teaching Canadian values through their own interpretations of Canadian culture (Derwing and Thomson, 2004, 2005). There has been discussion in the Canadian EAL field on what constitutes Canadian values and culture and how they should be taught. In some circles, culture is seen as a teachable, yet fluid, concept that can be integrated systematically into EAL curriculum (Courchene, 1996). From a different perspective, Ilieva (2001) draws on Kramsch’s notion that culture is conflict and advocates for exploratory and ethnographic approaches to learning to live in a different culture as it enables newcomers to negotiate the ambiguity that comes from adapting to a new environment. Sauve (1996) sees attending to culture as a necessary aspect of the EAL classroom, but she is less comfortable with the idea that it can be taught, particularly given the diversity that exists within

Canada. She states that “those referents and unspoken rules of behavior that we loosely call culture vary according to region, age, gender, ethnicity, class, race, rural versus urban locale, and work, to name some of the variables at play” (pp. 17-18). Rather than focus on delivering cultural information, Sauve (1996) advocates for “process modes of knowledge sharing and creation” (p. 18). Ilieva and Sauve’s perspectives acknowledge the diversity and fluidity of values, traditions and behaviours that exist in multicultural societies such as Canada. As important as their approach to knowledge generation is, both teachers and learners require a foundation on the various concepts of citizenship if citizenship education is to be taken seriously. Citizenship education is more than merely imparting facts about the nation-state. It requires understanding and participating in processes of citizenship, including engaging in discussions on non-consensual issues. In the following section, the main components of citizenship are outlined along with the prospects for an integrated citizenship program, a program that includes information gathering, knowledge generation, and participation processes.

Possibilities for Citizenship Education

“For democracies to thrive, citizens have to be taught to be democrats”, write Enslin, Pendlebury and Tjiattas (2001). What are the considerations for being a citizen in Canada? Why is citizenship education for immigrants to Canada important? These three issues are worth considering. First, many newcomers seem to want an opportunity to discuss issues of civic participation while they are involved in language education classes. Even though the media informs Canadians that interest and participation in Canada’s democratic institutions is flagging, according to a study conducted by Derwing and Thomson (2005), 93% of participants indicated that newcomers want to learn about citizenship and civic participation. While teaching in EAL programs for several years, I also found that learners expressed a strong interest in discussing social, political and historical aspects of Canada. They wanted to know how government is structured, how political processes function, and how they could participate. A desire to discuss and learn about these factors was sometimes expressed because they wanted to be able to help their children with homework. They indicated interest in having opportunities to discuss current national and global events such as Canada’s role in Afghanistan or the Canadian government’s move to legalize same-sex marriage. Some saw the EAL classroom as one of the few chances to discuss the wider socio-cultural context of their adopted homeland. The result was often insightful and critical discussions. These discussions, however, were sometimes fraught with tension because varying perspectives were articulated that challenged each learner’s (and the teacher’s) views on the issues.

Second, citizenship education is important not only because many learners want opportunities to learn about and engage in civic participation, but because political and economic stratification continues to persist in Canada. For example, within the first two years of migration only 42% of new immigrants have been able to find employment in their intended field. In addition, recent immigrants with university degrees earn less than half the income of Canadian-born earners with the same level of education (Statistics Canada, 2003, 2006). As will be explained in detail later, addressing and challenging stratification, therefore, requires citizens who see themselves as political agents of change as well as government institutions supporting opportunities to learn and participate.

Third, Derwing and Thomson (2005) found that, in their study of citizenship concepts as they are taught in LINC programs, topics of citizenship were taught through an emerging

curriculum approach; that is citizenship concepts emerged informally through classroom discussion. Therefore, whether citizenship issues are a formal part of curricula or not, they find their way into the classroom nonetheless. Rather than shying away from citizenship education and the tensions that arise in classroom discussion, the Canadian government working in conjunction with the EAL community should consider developing some clear conceptions on what constitutes citizenship education and provide necessary supports for EAL educators. In the remainder of this section, I draw on Schugurensky's (2006) integrated approach to citizenship education as a possible foundation for establishing programs.

According to Schugurensky (2006), citizenship is a multilayered term involving the four dimensions of status, identity, civic virtues and agency. Status relates to being an official member of a community and the term is usually equated with nationality. Identity, the second dimension, involves feeling like a member of a community through a common history, language, culture, traditions and values (Schugurensky, 2006). Civic virtues involve "the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are expected of 'good citizens'" (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 69). The definitions of these virtues differ from nation-state to nation-state and they are often contested within states. Agency, the fourth dimension of citizenship, promotes an engaged citizenry who live in a society "marked by a constant interplay of domination and autonomy" (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 69). Citizenship education programs tend to reflect various aspects of these dimensions.

In Canada, citizenship education for immigrants has tended to focus on assimilation and language training for labour market participation as explained earlier. In light of the four dimensions of citizenship and citizenship education as well as Canada's pluralistic citizenry, Schugurensky (2006) proposes an integrated program of citizenship education. The first component is concerned with creating an inclusive citizenship that addresses issues of status and membership in order to address growing inequalities. Ideally, within a nation-state all members of the community possessing the status of citizen will be considered equally with regards to the laws, rights and duties of the state. However, Schugurensky (2006) explains "it is pertinent to distinguish between ideal and real citizenship and between formal and substantive democracy. In short, formal equality is meaningless if it is contradicted by economic, social, political, and cultural inequalities" (p. 68). In the case of recent immigrants to Canada, Reitz (2001) has shown that the economic success of immigrants has been steadily declining since the 1990s despite the higher and higher levels of education many newcomers to Canada possess. This is one example that demonstrates the growing inequalities within Canada. Despite the official status of 'citizen' immigrants obtain after passing the citizenship test, economic and social inequalities persist. One way inclusive citizenship programs can contribute to addressing inequity is to ensure that curriculum content includes issues of human rights, social justice, political and economic democracy (Schugurensky, 2006). Rather than teaching the "official history" of Canada and promoting uncritical patriotism, an integrated program questions the status quo and examines the historical struggles and subjugation that have existed in Canada's development (Schugurensky, 2006). It is unlikely, however, that discussions on status will be harmonious because as explained earlier, inequality is one of the reasons conflict arises (Bickford, 1996). As long as economic, social and cultural inequalities exist within Canadian society, any discussion with respect to status will be conflictual.

The second component of an integrated approach to citizenship education addresses difference and identity through pluralistic citizenship. This means moving beyond the superficial and uncritical approaches found in some multicultural programs focusing on cultural customs, food and festivities of various ethnic groups (Schugurensky, 2006). Intercultural

programs differ significantly by examining power relations, discrimination and struggles between groups while also promoting a social justice agenda focused on critical multiculturalism and anti-racist education (Schugurensky, 2006). Equality remains a central aspect of pluralistic citizenship education, but a right to diversity is maintained to guard against an equality that leads to homogenization (Schugurensky, 2006). Pedagogical practices encourage “cross-cultural dialogue and mutual respect” and at the same time nurture collective action on issues that contribute to the well being of the whole society (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 77). This second dimension is especially important in EAL classrooms where a range of differences exist, yet some common issues related to migration processes (e.g. economic struggle, cultural integration, family concerns) also exist. Personal and collective identities, however, come into existence through difference (Hall, 1991, 1996). Talking with people whose identities and views of the world are different from our own can cause uncertainty and conflict. Living in a pluralistic society based on democratic principles necessarily involves considering a range of perspectives. As I explain later, conflict in classroom discussion on issues of identity and difference, rather than being negative, has the possibility to expand opportunities for learning.

Civic virtues, the third component, are addressed through the development of a critical and caring citizenship. Teaching practice involves encouraging learners and teachers to raise questions and problems, gathering and assessing pertinent information, thinking and communicating reflexively (Schugurensky, 2006). Attention is paid to power structures, hegemonic attitudes depicted in the media and the possibilities for equitable social change. This includes fostering a caring environment that promotes empathetic listening even when differences in viewpoints exist and consensus is not possible or necessarily desirable. It also involves learning about local and global issues, and accepting responsibility by taking action in concrete ways. Brian Morgan (1998, 2002) has demonstrated in his own EAL teaching practice that topics like the Gulf War and the 1995 Quebec referendum can encourage critical thinking and civic participation irrespective of the learners’ levels of language proficiency.

Finally, an integrated citizenship program promotes agency through active citizenship. Citizenship education from this perspective encourages citizens to view themselves as political subjects. This component encourages the individual and collective will to influence change through community development, democracy and social transformation. It promotes political efficacy and recognizes that political struggle is an immutable component of participatory democracies and prepares the citizenry to engage in decision-making. “Only active citizens can make governments accountable and generate meaningful social change” (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 78). Many immigrants arrive in Canada with the expectation that they will contribute through our political processes. Some, however, depending on the country from which they migrate, have limited experience with democratic institutions and political efficacy. While it is beyond the scope of the EAL classroom to address all aspects of education and learning needed for civic engagement, it can make a significant contribution to thinking about and critically discussing the issues related to democratic participation. Doing this, however, means conceptualizing what citizenship education could look like and challenging our fears of conflict that may arise through classroom discussion. Newcomers to Canada come to the EAL classroom with questions about Canada’s reservation system for Aboriginal peoples, why one of their children’s classmates has two mommies, and why the professional credentials of new immigrants often go unrecognized. Although such topics often elicit strong feelings and opinions, an integrated approach to citizenship education provides a foundation for discussing the historical and social developments

that have led to economic and political stratification within Canada. An integrated approach to citizenship education encourages discussion on how political and social changes have attempted to foster a socially just society. In addition, this form of education demonstrates that democratic processes continually change and that newcomers to Canada can be participants in this process.

Citizenship education alone will not resolve all of Canada's issues of inequity, but at the very minimum it can provide newcomers with access to the information and processes needed to participate in social and political transformation. Morgan (1998) asserts that second language education has had limited faith in its contribution toward social change.

Our world is most often focused on the short horizon, the measurably accomplished within finite parameters. The immeasurable has less value, so we rarely consider the motivational power of 'impractical' ideas. Perhaps it is time to reconsider our biases and our priorities. The boundaries upon inquiry are not divine acts but social constructions that have and will change. We can pretend that our place is to just impart the 'facts,' or we can educate for an active agency in the process of change. (p. 39)

Aiming for the inclusion of citizenship education requires considering some of the practicalities of teaching in the EAL classroom. One of the issues examined in the remainder of the article is related to discomfort and unease when non-consensual topics arise in classroom discussion. Citizenship education requires building the capacity of teachers and learners to navigate the uncertainties of discussing conflictual issues. Therefore, the following sections explore aspects of classroom dialogue and offer some suggestions for tackling challenging issues.

The EAL Classroom as a Site for Discussion and Conflict

The EAL classroom can at times be fraught with tension and unease particularly when issues such as same-sex marriage, women's rights, war and religious freedom become the focus of discussion, whether intentionally or unintentionally instigated. Recent studies conducted by Derwing and Thomson (2004, 2005) and Pinet (2006) demonstrate the federal government's lack of vision toward establishing citizenship education as well as a lack of support for EAL educators to institute citizenship education into their curricula and practice. In particular, these studies point to the discomfort teachers feel in discussing non-consensual issues to the point where some avoid such discussion or change topics when conflict arises. These circumstances are not easy to resolve and raise ethical concerns. To what extent does engaging with controversial topics compromise feelings of safety for some learners? At the same time, by suppressing such discussions, to what extent are teaching practices silencing or hindering opportunities to negotiate understandings of citizenship and democratic participation? While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to elaborate on these concerns, within the context of the adult EAL classroom, learners bring to the classroom questions about the differences, inequities, and uncertainties they encounter. As Burbules (2000) explains, "our teaching practices remain troubled by paradoxes and impossibilities of 'communicative dialogue' because there is no way to engage in teaching *without* encountering them" (p. 269, emphasis original). Therefore, a way to navigate these impossibilities needs to be considered.

Derwing and Thomson (2004, 2005) in their study examining the teaching of citizenship concepts in 44 LINC programs in three Canadian provinces, set out to find to what extent EAL teachers were focusing on citizenship issues in their classrooms. Through a questionnaire and

interviews, Derwing and Thomson (2005), found that most respondents saw the role of LINC as fostering integration into Canadian society and building language skills. While all the study participants saw teaching Canadian cultural values as important, several challenges hindered participants from engaging in issues of citizenship. A lack of appropriate materials and knowledge were cited as significant challenges. Resources were sometimes outdated and instructors had to rely on gathering widely dispersed documents such as newspapers, government publications and commercially reproduced textbooks, a time consuming endeavor. For example, concepts such as 'democracy' were explained only if they came up in class discussions and often were not an intentional aspect of the curriculum. In addition, Derwing and Thomson (2005) explain that the teaching of non-consensual topics that emerge in learning for citizenship were challenging for some teachers because their educational backgrounds often do not include knowledge of Canadian law, history and politics.

In a similar vein, Pinet (2006) in a study examining the teaching practice of five LINC teachers in Ontario, found that only one out of five teachers intentionally taught citizenship education from a transformational perspective. Based on Pinet's (2006) description, only this one teacher saw engaging learners in issues of human rights and citizenship education as one of her responsibilities. The other four out of five teachers expressed aversion to discussing non-consensual topics such as same-sex unions or women's rights. Maintaining a nurturing and harmonious environment tended to take precedence. As educators, we continually need to acknowledge the vulnerability of some learners. However, by suppressing opportunities to discuss issues related to citizenship and democracy, to what extent are teaching practices (and by extension, the state) communicating to new immigrants that their ideas and participation in democracy are not important?

Derwing and Thomson (2004, 2005) and Pinet's (2006) studies provide insight into the circumstances EAL teachers face. Based on the above observations, it therefore seems necessary to begin a discussion on how to build the capacity of EAL teachers to work within the unpredictable spaces of teaching citizenship and democratic concepts. The EAL classroom is a political space in which the multiple interests and social positionings of the learners and teachers are present in addition to the overarching explicit and implicit interests of the Canadian state. In such a space, controversial issues are unavoidable and some adult learners desire to contest and make sense of them. Controversial issues, however, create feelings of uncertainty and challenge understandings of identity and equality. How do educators learn to dwell within spaces where uncomfortable dialogue emerges? While the field of EAL turns to theories of language acquisition for guidance on facilitating listening and speaking, there has been little examination of theories on dialogue to assist teachers in engaging with the controversial aspects of discussion. Schugurensky's vision for an integrated citizenship provides a basis on which EAL educators can build a viable program. In addition, however, educators need theories that assist them with the practicalities of engaging with non-consensual issues and the challenges that emerge during classroom discussion.

The literature on issues of dialogue, power and student voice in classroom contexts have tended to focus on post-secondary settings (Burbules, 2000; Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 2003; Jones, 1999), or contexts in which learners come from the same language background (Freire, 2005). Ellsworth (1989) first raised concerns about classroom dialogue in her classic critique of critical pedagogy's approach to dialogue and student voice. Ellsworth (1989) critiqued theories on dialogue for not acknowledging the power dynamics and multiple subjectivities of students and teachers in classroom settings. Through her own teaching practice, Ellsworth (1989) noted that

even when teachers and students try to create classrooms as safe spaces to discuss contentious issues, this alone did not guarantee democratic dialogue would ensue. In a similar vein, Orner (1992) asserts that approaches to classroom dialogue tend to be based on the assumption that a fully conscious, fixed, and coherent self exists. These approaches ignore the unconscious processes of shifting identities of all members involved in the discussion. “Little or no attention is given to the multiple social positions, multiple voices, conscious and unconscious pleasures, tensions, desires, and contradictions which are present in all subjects, in all historical contexts” (Orner, 1992, p. 79). More recently, Gore (2003) has spoken about three problematic aspects of empowerment in classroom dialogue. First, empowerment is often focused on who is to be empowered, the subject or learner, rather than on the agent, the instructor, who is supposed to be doing the empowering. This places the teacher in a position of importance and ignores institutional and societal pressures that influence the context of the teacher’s work. Second, according to Gore (2003), pedagogies conceive empowerment within a notion of power as property. Power is a possession in the hands of the teacher, which he/she can give to students. Instead, Gore (2003) conceptualizes empowerment according to a Foucauldian tradition, in which power circulates through societal relations and exists in actions. It is exercised rather than possessed, and must be understood within specific contexts. Finally, she maintains that empowerment is often conceptualized as if there is a desirable end state, and is perpetuated in a simplistic dichotomy with oppression. Power is seen as either productive or repressive. Gore (2003) explains that when working with notions of empowerment, acknowledgement must be given to the historical and political struggles that characterize the exercise of power.

While the above critiques of classroom dialogue are informative, Burbules (2000) offers insightful comments on the assumptions that are made between dialogue and learning. He explains that dialogue has been fetishized and needs to be reassessed for being an inherently liberatory form of pedagogy. He questions whether dialogue has been

sufficiently sensitive to conditions of diversity, that is, the different forms of cultural communication, the different aims and values held by members of different groups, and the serious conflicts and histories of oppression and harm that have excluded marginalized groups from public and educational conversations in the past. (p. 257)

Therefore, in the case of teaching, Burbules (2000) explains that instructors need to develop more complex understandings of dialogue that recognize the multiple moments when dialogue may lean towards consensus and understanding, and at other moments may be transgressive and dispersive. He maintains that forms of dialogue such as in critical pedagogy or some forms of feminist pedagogy, which aim for liberation and inclusivity may in fact be normalizing. On the other hand, dialogue that leads to non-consensual conclusions does not necessarily mean that the dialogue has failed and that no learning or understanding occurred (Burbules, 2000).

The above articulations offer important considerations for the EAL classroom. Citizenship education involves the tug and pull of encountering ideas and opinions different from our own. As explained earlier, cross-cultural communicative discussion is an integral part of an inclusive citizenship program, but so is listening to and considering a range of perspectives with the intent of critical reflection and collective action. To foster such reflection and action requires challenging the tendency to avoid difficult issues and inspiring listening to one another.

Confronting Fear: Making a Shift in Thinking about the EAL Classroom as a Site for Discussion

In citizenship education programs, teachers cannot always predict the outcome of classroom discussion. Attempting to develop an integrated program of citizenship education in the EAL curriculum means that both teachers and students must confront their fears because tackling the content of non-consensual issues is cognitively complex and socially and emotionally charged (Bell et al., 2003). Anzaldua's (2002) concept of 'nepantla' provides a way of shifting teachers' thinking about conflictual dialogue in the classroom. Using the metaphor of a bridge, Anzaldua (2002) uses the concept of nepantla to theorize liminality, the "in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries" (p. 1). She explains that transformations can occur in these spaces if we see conflict in dialogue as a trigger for change. Rather than fleeing from conflict, delving deeply into it can bring understanding (Anzaldua, 2002). Discussion is altered through a diversity of perspectives. Within teaching practice, there is a tendency towards certainty and an expectation that classrooms will be safe or like a second home for students, but according to Anzaldua (2002), there are no safe spaces.

Staying "home" and not venturing out from our own group comes from woundedness, and stagnates our growth. To bridge means loosening our borders, not closing off to others. Bridging is the work of opening the gate to the stranger, within and without. To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safety because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded. (p. 3)

Citizenship education means challenging the taken-for-granted assumption that the classroom will always be a neutral and harmonious space, or that learning only occurs in such spaces.

Susan Bickford (1996) theorizes about the centrality of listening within democratic processes and although she is concerned with relations between nation-states, her ideas are informative for the EAL classroom. Bickford (1996) explains that in learning for citizenship, speaking has often been the focus of attention. It is her contention, however, that "*both speaking and listening are central activities of citizenship*" (p. 4, emphasis original). This involves avoiding the two extremes of defensively not listening and the other extreme of merely exchanging opinions. Listening is a passage built not through individual consciousness but through the social interaction between and among people. It is not attempting to inhabit another person's perspective or opinion within our own minds, but involves thinking together to expand the field of meaning (Bickford, 1996). She explains that "it is through communicative practices that we come to understand our interests and our identities in ways that inform our decisions about what to do" (p. 11). For Bickford (1996), listening and speaking about contentious issues requires courageous pathbuilding grounded not in an absence of self, but instead a presence of self. Pathbuilding, however, is scary because what we hear may require us to change, to reconsider and let go of entrenched assumptions about ourselves and others. Pathbuilding therefore requires "courage to be open to the possibilities of contradiction and conflict within oneself, to hear different voices and see from different vantage points, [and] to move beyond those shared vantage points to a unique view" (Bickford, 1996, p.123). Welton (2002) explains

that in citizenship education, we should not assume that a capacity for listening exists. With much of the focus in the EAL classroom on listening and speaking, the potential for building political efficacy and citizenship education exists.

Conclusion

The argument presented in this article by no means resolves the multitude of issues that exist around immigration and citizenship education for newcomers to Canada. It's intent, however, is to consider the possibilities of establishing an integrated citizenship program that includes the four dimensions of status, identity, values, and agency. Given recent research on the state of citizenship education and lack of support of EAL teachers, building the capacity of teachers to engage with the presence of non-consensual issues is also a necessary consideration. While much of the discussion here has been theoretical, it provides some grounding for shifting the way conflict, dialogue, learning and listening are thought about in classroom contexts. Teaching is an unpredictable and political endeavor, however there is the potential for building the capacity to listen. This means understanding and accepting that there will not be agreement on all issues and that learning still occurs despite disagreement. In contexts such as the EAL classroom, where difference abounds, there needs to be consideration for theories on dialogue to begin the action of engaging in non-consensual issues that arise through citizenship education, because such topics enter the classroom whether we want them to or not.

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