Emotions in Immigrant Language Education: from Acquisition Barrier to Affective Pedagogy

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EMO-TISSAGE / EMO-LEARNING
Affects dans l’apprentissage des langues
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Overarching objective: examination of the affective dimensions of adult immigrant second language education in Canada from a Deleuzian perspective.

3 angles
1. Curriculum = *what* to teach or content
2. Teachers’ perspectives = *who* teaches
3. Pedagogy = *how* teaching might go on
Research has established the complex ways in which emotion and cognition are intimately intertwined in language learning (Arnold, 2011; Dewaele, 2013) and in the professional experience of language teaching (Benesch, 2012; Golombek & Doran, 2014).

A proliferation of theoretical perspectives with distinct strands that focus on “linguistic, psychological and social aspects of the L2 learning process” (Pavlenko, 2013, p.6).

Explicitly critical approaches (see Benesch, 2016 for a review)
Anwarrudin’s (2017) discursive, materialist critique of research that frames migrant and refugee students “as emotionally vulnerable ‘problems’ in need of fixing” (p.113).

“The goal of this [critical] research is not to capture what emotions are, biologically or cognitively, or to discover whether they are good or bad for language teaching and learning, but instead to examine how they work socially” (Benesch, 2016, p.6).
What Deleuzian affect theory does...

Resists **binary oppositions** (Spinoza’s monism)

“The perspective of the affects requires us constantly to pose as a problem the relation between actions and passions, between reason and the emotions. **We do not know in advance what a body can do**, what a mind can think – what affects they are capable of. The perspective of the affects requires an exploration of these as yet unknown powers.” (Hardt, 2007, p.x)
What Deleuzian affect theory does...

**Affects:**

- exceed individual bodies; they are *relational*
- are powers or capacities to affect and be affected, transform (i.e. *becoming*, Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987)
- are visceral, preconscious, and autonomous
- may actualize in classrooms as *emotions*: fear, sadness, joy.
- described not in terms of what they *are* or what they *mean* for an individual human subject (student or teacher), but are *studied in terms of what they do* in the context of classroom (Benesch, 2012) and what they produce (e.g. emotions, or teacher pedagogical choices/responses)
- **Non-human bodies** (e.g. text-bodies) also affect and are affected.
Angle 1 - Curriculum

- **Project title:** Exploring the transformative powers of Deleuzean affect in immigrant English language classrooms: curricular and pedagogical implications

- **Acknowledgement:** funded by a *Nouveaux chercheurs* grant (2013-2014), Budget de développement de la recherche (BDR), Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, Université Laval

- **Research Question:** How is affect conceptualized in Canadian adult immigrant second language programs?
Angle 1 - Curriculum

• Identification & collection of key policy and curriculum documents from government funded immigrant official language education programs in Canada.

• Government websites:
  – federal for the *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada* (LINC program)
  – provincial & territorial programs
  – 2012 Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) & CLB curriculum support docs

• 30 e-documents analyzed from 8 provinces & 2 Territories
Angle 1 - Curriculum

Waterhouse & Mortier-Faulkner, 2014

• Psycho-cognitive orientations:
  ✓ motivation and willingness to communicate
  ✓ learner self-confidence and self-esteem
  ✓ key role that teachers play in supporting the learning process

• Linguistic orientations:
  ✓ learning outcomes related to communicative competence including sociocultural, pragmatic and sociolinguistic conventions.
Angle 2 - Teachers’ Perspectives

- **Title:** Perspectives des enseignants sur les dimensions affectives des classes de langue pour les immigrants : implications pédagogiques et sociales/ Teacher perspectives on the affective dimensions of immigrant language classes: pedagogical and social implications.

- **Acknowledgement:** funded by Fonds de recherche du Québec sur la société et la culture (2016-2019)

- **Online questionnaire for teacher-respondents.** Part of a three-year qualitative study exploring the pedagogical choices of French and English second language (FSL & ESL) teachers working with adult immigrants to Canada (Québec & Ontario) with respect to the affective dimensions of classroom life
  - How do the affective dimensions of their classrooms influence these teachers’ pedagogical choices?
  - **How do these teachers respond** to affective events that present themselves in their classrooms?
The need to develop a data collection tool aligning theory & method:

- theoretical-methodological commensurability in educational research on emotions (Kuby, 2016; Zembylas, 2007b).

Tierney (2011) makes the case for vignettes in research investigating:

- sensitive topics or ethically weighed dilemmas
- rarely occurring (not easily observable) and context-dependent phenomena
- decision-making situations
Angle 2 - Teachers’ Perspectives

• Online, vignette-based questionnaire distributed to teachers by Ontario and Quebec teacher associations via their list-serves and social media (e.g. facebook)

• French version

• English version
  https://monicawaterhouse.limequery.com/239992?lang=en

• open prompts invite affective responses to four fictionalized vignettes inspired by real-life experiences of teachers and students involving affectively charged events in adult immigrant second language classrooms (Waterhouse, 2011)
Angle 2 - Teachers’ Perspectives

Preliminary thinking with data & theory

• As suspected, emotionally charged events like the ones described in the vignettes are relatively rarely occurring.

• However, when they do, they are affectively impactful within the classroom, for both teachers and students.

• Teachers are responding positively to a research focus on questions of affect and are volunteering for the next phase of the study.
Angle 3 - Pedagogy

Classroom-based ethnographic research around arts-based pedagogy (October 2017 to June 2018):

• Another component of the three-year qualitative study exploring the pedagogical choices of teachers working with adult immigrants to Canada with respect to the affective dimensions of classroom life

✓ How might an arts-based, affective pedagogy offer teachers a way to meet the dual objectives of newcomer language programs: language learning and integration of immigrants?
From acquisition barrier to affective pedagogy:

- from exclusively linguistic texts to an appreciation of **art as affective thinking and knowledge** creation in the learning process (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; Semetsky, 2009)

- from teachers’ emotional labour (Benesch, 2012) in managing emotions to a critical reflection on the **ethical-political stakes of responses** to emotions.

- from teacher-centred control to **unknowablity** of exactly how learning will go on.
  - “There are no ultimate or final guarantees – **political**, **ethical**, aesthetic, **pedagogic**, and otherwise – that capacities to affect and to be affected will yield an actualized next or new that is somehow better than ‘now.’” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, pp.9-10).
Angle 3 - Pedagogy

Inspirations for an arts-based, affective pedagogy:

• "Exactly what forms such a pedagogy might take is to be constructed by each teacher and his/her students. To prescribe the sort of pedagogical techniques or classroom activities that teachers and students should be engaged in would be to institute another normalising discourse for teachers and students to submit to" (Zembylas, 2007a, p.343)
Choice of text
(Cole, 2016; Danzak, 2011)

- Affectively powerful art
- Benefits of a language-free text

• Shaun Tan’s graphic novel *The Arrival*
Working with the text


• Also, advantages for low literacy learners
You have left your readers with a very special gift: a headache. By which I mean a problem: what in the world to do with it all. That’s their problem. That’s where their experimentation begins. Then the openness of the system will spread. If they have found what they have read compelling. Creative contagion.

(Massumi, 2002, p.19)

Affective dimensions of adult immigrant second language education in Canada from 3 angles:

1. Curriculum
2. Teachers’ perspectives
3. Pedagogy
References

References
