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The Ethos of Diasporic Cultural Heritage in ESL Classroom Discourse:
A Crucial Agenda for Education

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Abstract

In today's multicultural and interconnected world, English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms are on the front line of embracing diversity. This paper underscores the crucial agenda of incorporating the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage within the context of ESL education.

Drawing upon scholarly research and theoretical frameworks, the study identifies effective strategies and approaches for integrating diasporic cultural heritage into ESL classroom discourse. The paper presents practical strategies, such as integrating culturally relevant materials, implementing oral histories and storytelling, and encouraging dialogue around cultural diversity. Furthermore, by actively engaging with diverse cultural perspectives and narratives, students can develop a global mindset, respect for diversity, and the ability to navigate intercultural spaces effectively.

In conclusion, intertwining the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse is a crucial agenda for education. This agenda aligns with the principles of social justice, promotes cross-cultural understanding, empowers students to navigate multiple cultural identities, and equips them with the necessary skills for success in a globalized world.

Keywords: Diasporic cultural heritage, ESL education, cultural diversity, ESL classroom discourse, global mindset

Introduction

In today's increasingly globalized world and cosmopolitan society, the notion of cultural heritage holds immense significance. As societies become more diverse, it becomes essential to explore and embrace the lavishness of cultural heritages and the rich tapestry of multiculturalism,

particularly within educational settings. This paper delves into a crucial agenda for education by examining the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage in English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom discourse.

The ethos of diasporic cultural heritage encompasses not only the tangible elements such as language, customs, and artifacts but also the tangible aspects, including collective memories, storytelling, and cultural practices. It is through these elements that individuals connect with their roots, maintain a sense of identity, and transmit their heritage to future generations. Recognizing and valuing diasporic cultural heritage within ESL classroom discourse enables students to develop a strong sense of self-esteem, cultural pride, and cross-cultural understanding.

However, despite the evident benefits, the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage is often overlooked or undervalued within ESL classroom discourse. This paper aims to highlight the importance of addressing this oversight and emphasize the need for a crucial agenda that integrates diasporic cultural heritage into ESL education. By doing so, we can create inclusive learning environments that recognize cultural diversity, nurture students' identities, and further intercultural competence.

Aim of this Study

The paper reflects on the work in progress and addresses the important issues of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL education. The study focuses on how diasporic cultural heritage is represented, understood, and utilized in the context of ESL teaching and learning. This paper seeks to shed light on the potential benefits of embracing diverse cultural backgrounds and narratives within the ESL classroom discourse and educational environment. It explores how diasporic cultural heritage can serve as a bridge between students' home cultures and the ESL classroom, creating a cross-cultural learning experience.

Research Objectives

This paper addresses the important issue of enhancing diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse which might smooth the path of intercultural communication and communication behavior. Based on the nature of the study, the following research objectives were defined:

i) To explore the representation and integration of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL education.

ii) To investigate the impact of incorporating diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse on students' identities, sense of belonging, and cultural awareness.

iii) To propose practical strategies and pedagogical approaches for effectively incorporating diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse.

Literature Review

The integration of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classrooms has gained increasing recognition in the field of education (Agnew, 2005; Banks, 2016; Gholami, 2023; Tomlinson, 2013). By synthesizing existing knowledge and theoretical perspectives, this review aims to establish a foundation for understanding the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage and its potential impact on ESL education.

Diasporic Cultural Heritage and Identity Formation

The connection between diasporic cultural heritage and identity formation has been extensively explored in the literature (Cohen, 2008; Hall, 1990; Holland et al., 1998; Gsir and Mescoli, 2015; Tölölyan, 2007). Research suggests that incorporating students' cultural backgrounds in ESL classroom discourse promotes a positive sense of identity and belonging. Jandt (2020) stresses that knowing another's cultural identity helps a person understand the opportunities and challenges that everyone in that culture must deal with. Studies by Lee (2003) and Phinney (1990) showed that accepting one's cultural heritage positively influences identity construction and self-esteem, and engagement in the learning process. The concept of "third space", coined by Bhabha (1994) also helps understand how diasporic identities emerge in the ESL context. According to Bhabha, Third Space Theory defines the individuality of each person or context as a "hybrid". Hybridity is an in-between space that might help anyone surpass the strangeness and exotism of cultural diversity.

 Thus, the integration of diasporic cultural heritage provided a platform for students to explore their own identities while simultaneously fostering a sense of belonging within the classroom. By valuing and celebrating diverse cultural perspectives, educators promoted a more inclusive and tolerant learning environment.

Representation of Diasporic Cultural Heritage in ESL Materials

ESL textbooks and instructional materials often underrepresent diverse cultural perspectives (Pennycook, 1998). He discusses the impact of cultural imperialism on language teaching materials. Norton and Toohey (2001) emphasize the need for culturally relevant resources to promote cultural appreciation. In this connection, Garcia-Sampedro (2018) considers cultural heritage as a resource for English as an additional language learner. McKay (2003) advocates for the integration of authentic materials reflecting diverse cultures. Accordingly, (Kubota, 2004) also points out that it is necessary to teach a foreign language and the culture of this language as it equips students with new cultural perspectives. Tan and Mante-Estacio (2021) according to their research, found that when students read texts that represent their background knowledge, it makes a positive effect on their comprehension. This view is supported by Feger (2006) who posits that culturally relevant texts enhance students' participation in reading and evolve students' feelings of self-efficacy. Moreover, Freeman and Freeman (2004) elaborate further and state that when teachers use culturally relevant books, students are motivated to read more because culturally relevant books are associated with their own lives. Thus, incorporating culturally relevant materials into the curriculum helps students feel more connected and engaged with the learning process, as they can relate to the content on a personal level.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching has emerged as a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the integration of students' cultural backgrounds in the learning process (Aceves and Orosco, 2014; Castagno and Brayboy, 2008; Chang and Vieska, 2022). Culturally relevant teaching claims that students cultivate a culture of integrity as well as academic excellence. Ladson-Billings (1995) highlights the importance of linking schooling and culture. She articulates that culturally relevant teachers employ students' culture as a vehicle for learning. Hammond (2015) elaborated on forefront neuroscience research which provides an avant-garde approach to developing brain-consistent culturally responsive instruction. She found that culturally responsive teaching facilitates upgrading students' information-processing skills and enhancing cognitive functions with the help of cultural learning tools. Gay (2018) posits that culture is essential to how all

learning takes place. Moreover, she goes further and argues that students might perform better on multiple measures of achievement when teaching is processed through students' own cultural experiences. Thus, by tailoring instruction to students' cultural backgrounds, educators can create an inclusive and empowering environment and facilitate meaningful connections between students' cultural heritage and the curriculum.

Language Learning, Cultural Exchange, and Intercultural Competence

The integration of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classrooms offers unique opportunities for language learning and cultural exchange. Kramsch (1993) regards second language teaching from a cultural viewpoint. She states that its central objective is to teach the cultural context of discourse in the target language, rather than to teach the traditional four Language skills and culture as a fifth component. Studies by Arianie (2017) and Ekawati (2019) have shown that incorporating authentic materials from students' cultural backgrounds enhances language acquisition, as learners engage with meaningful and contextually relevant content. Through sharing personal stories, traditions, and cultural practices, students develop intercultural competence, gain a deeper understanding of diverse cultural perspectives and challenge stereotypes. Byram (2021) also assumes the development of intercultural competence helps students navigate between cultures effectively. Teaching diversity prepares students to effectively deal with multiple cultural and social contexts, promote positive cross-cultural interactions, and become global citizens (Gladushyna, 2021).

Challenges and Considerations

While integrating diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse brings numerous benefits, educators face challenges in its implementation. Studies by Poedjistutie, Mayaputri, and Arifani (2021) and Rodriguez (2014) have identified potential challenges such as social-cultural changes, limited resources, language barriers, and cultural differences among students. Addressing these challenges requires careful planning, professional development for teachers, and collaborative efforts between educators, families, and communities.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research have provided insights into the impact of integrating diasporic cultural heritage on language learning, intercultural competence, and student experiences.

This study underscores the importance of integrating diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse. The results demonstrate that such integration has a positive impact on language learning, intercultural competence development, and students' sense of belonging. By embracing students' cultural identities and creating opportunities for them to explore and share their heritage, educators can improve language acquisition, promote intercultural understanding, and nurture a positive classroom ethos.

The ethos of diasporic cultural heritage refers to the values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and shared experiences of a dispersed group of people who maintain a connection to their ancestral culture. Those customs and traditions are preserved and passed down by diaspora communities often across generations and geographical boundaries. Within the context of ESL (English as a Second Language) education, incorporating the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage can have several practical applications to enhance the learning experience, promote cultural diversity and understanding, and create a more inclusive and meaningful educational environment.

Practical Implications for ESL Classroom Discourse

Diasporic Cultural Heritage and Museum Education: Diasporic cultural heritage and museums are valuable resources and sociocultural sites in ESL teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning do not only take place within the classroom. Diasporic cultural heritage and museums create a vital educational environment as they provide students with a real and positive experience and connection with places, people, and events. As a result, they learn how to appreciate artifacts, and historical and cultural objects, value diversity, gain new knowledge and skills, how maintain cultural heritage, and participate in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, by using cultural heritage materials, teachers can open the door for the development of students' language, cultural, museum, and visual literacy skills, and develop new vocabulary. Teachers can offer their students different learning opportunities that encompass linguistic, emotional, aesthetic, intercultural, and interactive experiences. They should encourage students to get involved in

meaningful discussions, creative, enjoyable, and rewarding activities. Students can make a variety of catalogs, videos, and posters, write essays, and share their personal stories. By incorporating diasporic cultural heritage and museum education into the ESL teaching and learning process, teachers can help students improve and deepen their understanding of their own cultural identity and the unique experience of other people.

Culturally Relevant Content: ESL teachers can introduce ESL learners to literature, music, art, and historical narratives from their own diasporic cultures. By doing so, learners validate and celebrate their cultural backgrounds, making the learning experience more engaging and relevant.

Language Learning through Heritage Languages: Many diasporic communities have their languages distinct from the language they are learning. Teachers can incorporate heritage language components in ESL instruction for those students who still speak their ancestral language. This can facilitate language learning, preserve their cultural identity, and lead to improved self-esteem and academic performance.

Cultural Projects and Presentations: Cultural projects allow students to research and present on topics related to their diasporic heritage. This could involve traditional cuisines, festivals, historical figures, or any aspect that holds significance to their cultural background. Such projects foster pride and ownership in one's heritage while improving language skills.

Storytelling and Oral Traditions: The importance of storytelling and oral traditions within diasporic cultures should be emphasized. Many diaspora cultures have rich storytelling traditions. Teachers can encourage students to share personal stories or folktales from their heritage, promoting language fluency, vocabulary expansion, and cultural preservation. This also helps create a platform for cultural exchange and empathy-building.

Celebrating Cultural Events: Acknowledging and celebrating important cultural events and holidays from various diasporic backgrounds within the ESL classroom fosters a sense of community, respect for diversity, and a deeper understanding of each other's cultures. When students showcase their traditions, customs, and artistic expressions, this not only validates their cultural identity but also promotes tolerance and appreciation of diversity among all students.

Integrating Cultural Practices into Language Learning: Using cultural practices, such as traditional songs, dances, or games to teach language skills helps integrate these practices into ESL lessons and makes learning more enjoyable, and helps students retain new language concepts.

Engaging with Diasporic Communities: When teachers facilitate interactions with local diasporic communities through field trips, guest speakers, or community engagement projects, this provides students with real-life exposure to their heritage culture and enhances their language learning experience. Community involvement strengthens the connection between students' heritage and their language-learning journey.

Addressing Identity and Hybridity in ESL Classroom Discourse

Discussions about the complex identities of diasporic individuals, their feelings of belonging, and the hybridity of cultures that occurs through migration can be encouraged by teachers. This helps students build self-awareness and empathy toward their peers.

Language Proficiency through Cultural Context: Teachers could teach English language skills through the lens of diasporic cultural heritage. Traditional stories, proverbs, or idioms from students' cultural backgrounds are rather effective approaches to teaching grammar, vocabulary, and language usage. Such approaches provide a meaningful context for language learning and encourage students to embrace their heritage.

Critical Thinking and Cultural Analysis: Students are to be motivated to critically examine the impact of diasporic cultural heritage on identity, belonging, and social dynamics. Analyzing the interplay between culture, language, and society can deepen students' understanding of themselves and others.

Global Perspective and Empathy: Diasporic cultural heritage can be used as a springboard to discuss global issues and challenges faced by diaspora communities worldwide. This approach fosters empathy, cultural awareness, and a broader understanding of the global human experience. It also equips students with valuable skills and perspectives that are essential in a modern interconnected and multicultural world.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the ethos of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse and emphasized its crucial agenda for education. The ethos of diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classroom discourse holds immense significance and potential for transforming education. The study has shed light on the impact and significance of integrating diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classrooms, as well as the implications for language learning, intercultural competence, and student experiences.

The findings of this study highlight that integrating diasporic cultural heritage enhances language learning by creating meaningful connections between students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It fosters motivation, engagement, and linguistic confidence among students. By incorporating culturally relevant materials and activities, educators facilitate vocabulary development, language acquisition, and improved oral and written communication skills.

Furthermore, the study reveals that integrating diasporic cultural heritage empowers students by validating their cultural identities and providing a sense of belonging within the classroom. Sharing personal stories, traditions, and artifacts enhances students' self-esteem, confidence, and overall well-being. When students' voices and experiences are acknowledged and respected, they become active participants in their language-learning journey. The implications of this study emphasize the need for educators to embrace culturally responsive pedagogy and provide ongoing professional development to effectively integrate diasporic cultural heritage in ESL classrooms. By equipping educators with the necessary training, resources, and guidance, educational institutions can create an inclusive and enriching learning environment that prepares students for a globalized world.

This paper emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development and support for educators to effectively integrate cultural diversity into their teaching practices.

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