Conceptual Territory II: Diversity Essay

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The word diversity originates from the Latin phrase *Diversa Tatum*, meaning "contradiction" or "disagreement", and it (is generally an old word that) appeared in contemporary English usage of a medieval French word which referred to difference. The etymology unfolds for us a bit about how the European language captures the "inherent polarities" of this very word, as elaborated by scholar Elizabeth Thomas (=> as elaborated by scholar .., diversity is a concept about "inherent polarities" as "a very…"), that it is "a very old way of thinking about human difference" (Thomas, 2020). We shall take an expansive view of diversity, that it is not only about the underserved populations in the United States, but also American society and educational settings in general with rich constituents of multiple ethnic and racial groups of people and students (=> for readability, make it into two sentences; not to be unnecessarily lengthy; portray the message, and think of one's audience). Diversity is "heterogeneous", encompassing racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic components and beyond, and with learning contexts being "immanently hybrid" according to scholars Gutiérrez et al. (1999), and "conflict, tension, and diversity are intrinsic to learning spaces" (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, page #-APA). Therefore, when leveraged properly and purposefully, diversity can transform the learning activities.

For individuals and people within a community, we cannot leave out describing people with their *identity*, which "defines" loosely, precisely or holistically who a person is and what are their associated characteristics, as learners are closely interactive with their situated learning environment. Identity "is a problem" as suggested rhetorically by scholar Hebert (2001), associated to which schools' accommodation and curriculum reflect "ethno-cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious diversity" as identity, diversity and education are put together. In parallel,

from an ethnographic view, diversity is about how similar or different people are when comparing under cross-cultural, cross-ethnic, and transnational lenses (Lee et al., 2018).

Diversity and inclusion are interconnected, even though the former does not guarantee the latter. According to Ferdman (2014), inclusion "emerged as a core concept in relation to diversity" and is an approach toward diversity. In outlining "culturally sustaining pedagogy" or CSP, Paris and Alim (2017, chapter 1) describe the central task for an inclusive framework as the decentering of whiteness for instance from an oppressive system and homogenizing forces; it values uniqueness as well as social transformation in students. Thomas, Mia and Dawson (2010) propose an "inclusive strategy of teaching diversity"; in the article they point out that many schools have done well in diversity but not all in inclusivity, and perform a thorough study and design toward this teaching goal for diversity.

For literacy education, one signature aspect of diversity might perhaps be the *linguistic diversities* which refer to the "communicative actions" central to our discourses (Kinloch, 2005), from which in descriptive terms it can encompass the various modalities of speech and different written and spoken languages used. In this work "Revisiting the Promise of 'Student's Right to Their Own Language'", scholar Kinloch elaborates that although myths persist around linguistic diversity in composition, and how we engage in workspace and classrooms, we educators should experiment to find supplemental pedagogical approaches because diversity is "either (un)marked by cultural, racial, linguistic, and/or literate practices" (p. 90). To measure linguistic diversity, Greenberg (1956) suggests using the "probability that two individuals speak the same language", mathematically, on a random basis from within a given population, as a measure of how diverse language usage is. In addition, in a slightly interdisciplinary work Frainer et al. (2020) compare language diversity with cultural and biological diversities which are interconnected in a human

society, suggesting that by and large "cultural and linguistic diversities would have been intimately related and even derived from biological diversity" (p. 3); this provides developmental lens as to how speech and literacy as social practices develop and evolve with and accompanied by their surrounded environments.

A healthy, multicultural educational environment is expected to be associated with diversity as the harmonious, multicultural soil that fosters unity, although diversity does not imply unity. It is important to acknowledge the presence of diversity in an educational environment. As suggested in Dr. Thomas' address, we need first an open mind to think about our own identities and social positions while interacting with the world, and we also need the willingness to "sit in our own discomforts" in listening to, speaking about, and embracing diversity (Thomas, 2020). As diverse, cultural beings, learners and their environment are combined into an "equal coexistence of diverse cultures in a mutually supportive relationship" or what is called *cultural pluralism* (Pai and Adler, 1997).

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