

Plurality, linguistic justice, and decolonization:

Addressing current issues in teaching first-year writing to multilingual learners



Workshop in collaboration with BCcampus

PRISM Framework as Multi-Institutional Strategy



Territorial Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Syilx Okanagan Nation and their peoples, in whose traditional, ancestral, unceded territory UBC Okanagan is situated.

About the project



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PRISM framework as multi-institutional strategy

Objectives: Participants will

- 1) develop foundational knowledge and match the framework to design activities that are culturally and linguistically responsive;
- 2) Develop further understanding of linguistic diversity and linguistic justice possibilities in response to student writing; and
- 3) reflect on the research-based framework in relation to professional identities and rethinking practice.



Invited Speakers



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PRISM FRAMEWORK



About the PRISM Framework

The four facets of the PRISM framework

- Position multilingual students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as assets;
- Demonstrate ways, practices, and strategies to support multidimensional experience of linguistic justice and decolonization in the Canadian context.



Plurality, Raciolinguistics, Indigenous Worldviews, and Social Justice for Multilingual Learners



About the PRISM Framework:

Linguistic Justice:

- Valuing all languages and language varieties as legitimate and meaningful.
- Affirming students' right to use their own language and dialect.
- Recognizing multilingualism as an asset and critically examining the biases that have long privileged standard academic English.



Plurality, Raciolinguistics, Indigenous Worldviews, and Social Justice for Multilingual Learners



About the PRISM Framework:

For each of the four facets, there are:

- A concise summary and conceptual overview
- Theoretical stances
- Sample teaching practices
- Recommended resources



Plurality, Raciolinguistics, Indigenous Worldviews, and Social Justice for Multilingual Learners



GUIDING QUESTIONS

As you participate in today's workshop, think about what would work in *your* educational context? What would you use and what would you like more information on?

PRISM FRAMEWORK TO DESIGN ACTIVITIES THAT ARE CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE: USING PLURILINGUALISM



Plurilingualism

- 1. Use of multiple languages in interactions*
- 2. Languages as hybrid rather than discrete*
- 3. Plurilingual/pluricultural competence as uneven*
- 4. Plurilingual/pluricultural competence as changing*
- 5. The plurilingual speaker as a social agent*
- 6. Mediation*

* <https://carap.ecml.at/>



the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (2001)



What stands out to you in these data excerpts about plurilingual students in BC higher education?

Ivan: 说那个, repeating writing 完了之后, 然后把那句子改变就行了, 对不对? The fact is academic writing is.. so.. for university students, Academic Writing is not always easy. 第二个是那个。。 simple words吧?

Yi: Humm, 对。呵, 不是。是 simple sentence structure。

Ivan: After doing the repeating writing, only the sentence needs to be changed, right? “The fact is academic writing is.. so.. for university students, Academic Writing is not always easy”.

Yi: Humm, you are right. Ah, no, you are not right. Actually, that's a simple sentence structure.

Source: Marshall, S., & Moore, D. (2013). *2B or not 2B plurilingual? Navigating languages literacies, and plurilingual competence in postsecondary education in Canada*. TESOL Quarterly, 47(3), 472-499.



Raj: I heard people talking in different languages, I go and tell them “in English in English” ... Actually, I am discouraging them from dealing with anything other than English. I tell them, “look, you talk to each other in English, somehow try to communicate” but I think the moment there's nobody looking over their shoulder, then all of that disappears and they feel more comfortable talking in Korean, Punjabi, or Chinese.

Source: Marshall, S. (2020). Understanding plurilingualism and developing pedagogy: Teaching in linguistically diverse classes across the disciplines at a Canadian university. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 33(2), 142-156.



Mandarin as a tool for learning in a linguistics class

Marshall, S., Moore, D., James, C. L., Ning, X., & Dos Santos, P. (2019). Plurilingual Students' Practices in a Canadian University: Chinese Language, Academic English, and Discursive Ambivalence. *TESL Canada Journal*, 36(1), 1-20.

Chen: AMERICA, 可能是...A-M-E-R-I-C-A 就寫..[laugh] (AMERICA, maybe A-M-E-R-I-C-A, let's write down..)

04:30 - C2: 就四個 syllable 嗎? (Are there only 4 syllables?)

04:45 - C2: 這個..我覺得應該是 unbounded (I think it should be unbounded)

Chen: 那還是那個 exhausted (then that is still exhausted)

Yu: unbounded 是 exhaustedness of the.. (Unbounded is exhaustedness of the..)

Yu: headedness of [something] is left-headed

Chen: 那你那個 image is extrametric...是第一個要這樣區 這個我覺得好像不用.... (then your, that image is extrametric. For the first one, you must inflate that.. but for this I don't think so)

Yu: 那像是這個吧! (so like that?)

Chen: 這個是需要的 但是這個的話 不是因為有那個..(This is necessary, but for that, isn't it because we have that...)

Yu: 有 stress (have stress)

Chen: 這個就是有多餘的那個東西 就是有多餘的 其實我也..(This is something extra thing, it's like extra, actually i am..)

Yu: 這個應該跟那個差不多 (this should be not any different from that)



Why don't you use English to study?

Marshall, S., Moore, D., James, C. L., Ning, X., & Dos Santos, P. (2019). Plurilingual Students' Practices in a Canadian University: Chinese Language, Academic English, and Discursive Ambivalence. *TESL Canada Journal*, 36(1), 1-20.

Angel: It's much easier to use native language to talk about assignments and tasks in the group discussion. In study group, we also use Mandarin to discuss problems. It improves our study.

Bo: Speaking Mandarin with Chinese students in the group discussion can give a sense of closeness, which I think is important for me.

Chen: If we refer to some technical terms, we use English because it is not easy to translate them, but for general questions, we just use Mandarin which is easier for understanding each other.

Fen: In group discussion, if I sit with groups of native speakers, I feel stress and sometimes I can't catch up with them, but if I am in groups of Chinese students speaking Mandarin, I feel comfortable and more confident and it helps my study.



An example of mediation: Translators and study groups

Ashley: Linguistics class

- Yeah, so I definitely noticed that **students of the same language- language background tend to sit together** and ... sometimes I hear them talking to each other in mostly Mandarin.... I've definitely had students come to office hours in pairs or groups where **one is kind of a translator for the rest**, um, which is interesting. ... So, students having **study groups** in their native language seems reasonable to me with, one of them gets a concept a little bit better and can **help explain it to the others**, that seems great.



Implications for Practice?

- Should we tolerate, encourage, or discourage students' use of languages other than English in our classes?
- Does it matter if instructors and students don't understand all of the languages being used in their classes? Is this taking inclusion too far?
- In what contexts can we accept partial competence in our teaching and assessment?
- Should instructors proactively or reactively respond to linguistic diversity in classes, and how?
- Do you have any questions?



UNDERSTANDING POSSIBILITIES OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: RACIOLINGUISTICS AND POSITION STATEMENTS



Raciolinguistic perspectives

- Race and language are interrelated.
- Address the uncomfortable quietude of marginalized voices in writing classrooms by creating safe space for diversity, social and cultural experiences, and histories of individuals and communities.
- The facet aligns with Alim's (2016) recognition of "racialization as a process of socialization in and through language, as a continuous project of becoming as opposed to being" (p. 2).

Strategy: Recognize racial identity, perceptions, personal and emotional experiences of teachers and not just students to see how those influence pedagogy, selection of learning material, and assessment practices.

[Writing and Power: Positions and Policies for Social Change](#), Sara Humphreys



PRISM FRAMEWORK: RETHINKING PRACTICE IN RELATION TO INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS

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Decolonizing (and Indigenizing?) Engineering Communication



Curricular Contexts

Engineering Undergraduate Program

- Accredited program that leads to professional licensure
- Students specialize but take core courses throughout the program, including two communication courses



Decolonizing / Indigenizing

- UNDRIP, TRC, DRIPA
- Engineers & Geoscientists BC, Engineers Canada
- UBC, Faculty of Applied Science, School of Engineering

Program pathway

Goal: Support students' understanding of *how* and *why* to engage with Indigenous communities in Canada in the contexts of engineering practice.



Course pathway: APSC 201

Course Learning Outcomes

- Communicate ethically and effectively in a variety of situations
- Apply principles of intercultural communication
- Collaborate effectively in communication contexts

Indigenous Community Communication Project (ICCP)

- Semi-fictional: fictional company and project, actual community
- Prepare the company to engage with the community



Re-thinking Practice



Re-thinking identities?

syilx <the ones who coil>



UNDERSTANDING POSSIBILITIES OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WHEN RESPONDING TO MULTILINGUAL STUDENT WRITING

Jennifer Walsh Marr

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LINGUISTIC EQUITY

Language as access

JENNIFER WALSH MARR



Instructor responses:

“I’m not teaching English as a second language” (p. 38)

“I think we have a moral obligation and if we bring students into university, and we tell them there is a threshold for English wherever that is, that should be a realistic threshold for success” (p. 40)

“[the institution] does not train faculty to help students navigate this dilemma” (p. 38)

(Marshall & Walsh Marr, 2018)



IELTS test score guidance for educational institutions

(IELTS, 2019)

	Linguistically demanding academic courses	Linguistically less demanding academic courses	Training courses
7.5-9	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
7.0	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.5	English study needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable
6.0	English study needed	English study needed	(Probably) Acceptable

Lam & Gayton (2024) advocate for enhanced Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) for university staff and instructors.



Disciplinary literacy

What does it mean to write like

- a historian
- a pharmacist
- a manager
- an admin assistant
- an artist
- a police officer
- a counselor
- a designer



Writing Centres

- We don't edit, proofread or do grammar
 - aka Socratic or "non directive" feedback
- Appointment limits
- Non-specialist peer tutors

"viewed through an antiracist lens, such seemingly race- and disability-neutral policies can in fact negatively and disproportionately affect minoritized writers and tutors" (Natarajan et al., 2023)

Practice may vary, but messaging is pretty consistent across Canada (Aldohon, 2021; Natarajan et al., 2023)



Students' perspectives

multilingual students want “concrete suggestions” and language support to be provided *within* courses “rather than asking students to rely on campus support services” (Page, 2023, p. 47).



Deconstruction

- Help students "read their classes" (Johns, 2019, p. 135)
- "Ask the right questions" of texts (Caplan, 2019)
- Look at assignment sheets as genres (Allen, 2024)

Caveat: Student writing samples

- “occluded genres” (Swales, 1996)
- “Where research genres aim to persuade the reader of the validity of new findings, and textbooks aim to explain or instruct, **assignments generally aim to demonstrate the acquisition of required skills and accepted knowledge**”
 - (Gardner & Nesi, 2013, p. 29)



Patterns over rules

Bad rules

- Write like you speak
- Passive voice is evil
- Big nouns are zombies

Good questions

- Does a paper in your discipline typically begin with an example or anecdote?
 - Or does it begin with a theory and *then* exemplify it?
 - How much and what type of detail does each require?
- Do we write in full paragraphs or dot point?
- Does a closing sentence summarize, synthesize, provoke or preview?
- What's put in the past, what's present and how do we talk about what might be?



Definition of key terms

“an opportunity to articulate foundational knowledge and establish frames of reference” (Walsh Marr et al., 2021, p. 3)

“the ability to define words made a unique contribution to the students’ summary writing performance even after the effects of reading comprehension and writing fluency were controlled for” (Baba, 2009, p. 202)



Assessment criteria

What are you looking for (other than you'll know it when you see it)?

Deconstruct strong examples

- for valued features

...and weak examples

- for common pitfalls

Use these to make a user-friendly rubric



COMMUNITY BUILDING



Social annotation

celebration of difference; whether out of a suspicion of the power of global, homogenizing forces ('the media', 'American multinationals', and so on); or out of a pleasure gleaned from experiencing variety and the unexpected. Sometimes the local is cherished for its communal forms of social organization, for embodying an ideal of small and democratic organizations (for a critical and suggestive review see Young, 1990). And sometimes this social idealization goes hand in hand with an environmental utopia of self-supporting, environmentally sustainable livelihoods (Schumacher, 1973), or at least an appeal to the local as a way of living more lightly on the planet, as when calls are made to reduce 'food miles' by 're-localizing' supply networks and supporting local producers. But whether culturally, socially or environmentally framed, in all such arguments the local does not just matter. It matters because it is in some way 'good'.

What does "good" mean in this sentence? Is it positive or negative?

* REPLY ▾

I think "good" is positive, because it serves as a summary of the examples given in the paragraph about the advantages of local, and it responds to the point "as a good thing" at the beginning of the paragraph. As for its meaning, I think it wants to express because of the uniqueness of local, it can provide inspiration and maintain the balance between local and global both in reality and in research.

* REPLY ▾

I think the 'good' here means the local thinks enlarging the scale of doing technology research is the most important thing that benefits it, no matter how the culture, social and environme ...

* REPLY ▾

(Walsh Marr & Tan, 2025)

Supported peer review

“peer review helps me to know others perspectives on my writing and working in small groups makes more chance to exchange opinions”

"We get inspiration by talking to each other"

(Ferreira et al., 2025)



Public writing

Definition

"A situated, distributed act of engaging public audiences through writing, with various semiotic resources and modalities, to make meaning, connect, and/or bring about social change"

(Wang, 2025)

Task

- Write a professional email to someone in a position of power about what you have learned through your research and writing.
- The purpose of this email is to advocate for change in policy or action through persuasion.

(Walsh Marr & Lynch, in press)



Disruptive practice

"Recognizing difference is an important antidote to universalisms that erase (or assimilate) values (Marginson & Mollis, 2001), as insights into others' values can generate intercultural learning, mutual respect, and expanded realms of understanding. In the context of internationalized higher education, an awareness of differing cultural values and ideal types can help expand pedagogical practices and get us all closer to broadened worldviews.

(Walsh Marr, 2023, p. 102)

We need to disrupt not only the "white listening subject" (Flores & Rosa, 2015), but the white reader as well.



Thank you

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Concluding Q & A



CALL FOR CHAPTERS | Addressing Current Issues in Teaching First-Year Writing to Multilingual Learners: Plurality, Linguistic Justice, and Decolonization



This publication will impact the research community's efforts to: move theory into practice, recognize how the Canadian context can foreground Indigenous, bilingual and multilingual worldviews that promote more equitable multilingual and multicultural teaching practices, and understand linguistic diversity and linguistic justice possibilities when responding to student writing. The book will be organized in three sections on theory, practical context (examples of innovative practices and/or actionable strategies), and assessment to enhance linguistic justice and decolonization efforts.

Researchers and practitioners are invited to submit on or before **January 4, 2026**, a chapter proposal of 1,000 to 2,000 words clearly explaining the mission and concerns of their proposed chapter. Authors will be notified by **February 1, 2026** about the status of their proposals and sent chapter guidelines.

For more information, please email: linguisticjustice.canada@gmail.com