
TRANSCULTURATION AND AFFECT IN THE L2 CLASSROOM: TEACHING ENGLISH AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE YUCATAN

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By offering a transdisciplinary analysis of the development of an EFL/ethnography program in Mexico, this study proposes transculturation, as opposed to acculturation (a process commonly cited by applied linguists), as a more comprehensive conceptual tool for understanding the learning dynamics of the L2 classroom. SELT, School of Experimental Language Training, in the Maya community of Pisté, Yucatán, (Mexico) was a program that sought to teach English to local Pisteleños and to train U.S. university students both in EFL methods and in the practice of cultural ethnography. This study discusses SELT and its uses of Spanish, English and Yucatec Maya in terms of the dynamics of power and authority in the EFL classroom. In comparing the EFL and ethnographic practices employed by SELT, the study explains how transculturation, a concept derived from sociology, anthropology and literary criticism, accounts for multi-directional communication and learning in the L2 classroom. It also suggests affect to be one of the principal components in the transdisciplinary evocation of transculturation.

Key words: *transculturation, acculturation, cultural anthropology, ethnography, affect, indigenous languages*

1. Introduction

Learning and using a language is at its core a broad interactive process founded on complex relationships with others and with another culture

(Arnold & Brown, 1999). If we understand cultural anthropology's fieldwork methods, or ethnography, as participant observation and documentation of another culture, it is feasible to hypothesize similarities between the ethnographic project and the L2 learning situation. Indeed, the kind of relational complexities inherent in second language learning are at the center of the self-reflexive modes of cultural anthropology emerging from the 1980's (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986) that questioned ethnographic authority, in part, by reassessing the dynamics between ethnographer and informants, between observing and being observed, and between cultures in zones of contact (Pratt, 1991).¹ In focusing on those complex interpersonal and cross-cultural connections inherent in ethnography, anthropological practices intersect with the research domains of applied linguists who study affect and socio-cultural pragmatics as factors in the L2 learning process. Thus, while anthropological and applied linguistic disciplinary goals are clearly different, their analytical and methodological strategies may overlap within the context of considering how attitudes, emotions, anxiety, identity issues, and the dynamics of power and control engage the fields they study.

It was from this understanding of disciplinary complementarity that the School of Experimental Language Training (SELT) was initiated as a locus for the teaching of ethnography and English as a Foreign Language. SELT was part of the Field School of Experimental Ethnography (1997-1999) created by cultural anthropologist, Quetzil Castañeda and the University of Houston. After more than a decade of research and work in the Maya community of Pisté, Yucatán, Mexico, Castañeda initiated the Field School to train U.S. students in the methods and practices of ethnography. He included the English language program as part of the Field School based on direct requests from the citizens of Pisté for instruction in English. I worked with Castañeda, as co-director of SELT, to plan and implement a language program based on the needs and desires of the families of Pisté and

¹ The most significant self critique emerging out of the 1980's was a questioning of discursive authority in ethnographies in terms of the politics and ethics of representation.

to use that space for the practice of experimental ethnography as it is being theorized by Castañeda (see Castañeda & Breglia 1998).

Experimental ethnography questions the ethics of ethnography by trying to get at the possibility of undoing the standard self-other binary from which modern anthropology arose. This would allow ethnography to reposition itself within a scenario where a multiplicity of selves develop through the context and process of transculturation. Transculturation, a concept first coined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940, refers to the process of mutual adaptation that occurs when two cultures are in contact (Ortiz, 1995). This process is often based on asymmetrical relationships of power (Pratt, 1991) and supposes both a loss and a gain that results in a hybrid and new cultural form.²

Instead of documenting the “other’s” culture, experimental ethnography strives to document the selves of the transculturative moment itself, or may even try to evoke such moments, wherein a new hybrid culture evolves within the “world” or parameters of the ethnographic relationship. These kinds of new contextually-defined social relationships are also what render the L2 classroom as a social community where the interactions and exchanges therein create a unique “kind of culture” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p.19).

In this respect, for SELT, the learning/teaching of English was not an isolated goal in and of itself. The structuring and functioning of SELT as an EFL classroom was always tied to presuppositions about the culture(s) of the classroom and how experimental ethnography could evoke moments of transculturation. These presuppositions³ suggested that to facilitate such

² The concept of transculturation has been continually reworked (since its first use by Ortiz in examining Cuban society and history) to accommodate its utility as a critical tool in literary and cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and anthropology (see Rama, 1982; Pratt, 1991; Mignolo, 2000).

³ Most of these ideas evolved from taped conversations in Houston between Abdel Hernández and Quetzil Castañeda in which they discussed possibilities for the implementation of SELT as a locus for the practice of experimental ethnography in the EFL classroom.

moments it was necessary to concentrate on the fluidity and porous-ness of teacher-student, Pisté-Field School, and Maya-US relationships to create and reveal cultural contact zones. Within this learning and creative space we would attempt to value the Maya, their language, customs, history, legends, and traditions, at the same time that we would be teaching English. In essence, the fundamental task in SELT was to look for complementary L2 methods that would precipitate and support the kind of “transculturative” space that experimental ethnography also attempts to generate. Not only did this require a prior understanding of critical pedagogical theory, the principles of experimental ethnography, and actual experience in the classroom, it invoked those less-than-scientific and usually immeasurable factors called imagination, intuition, creativity, and spontaneity in mixing and matching L2 and ethnographical discourses to turn them into viable SELT strategies. Within current thinking about second-language acquisition the hybrid process through which SELT evolved might best be understood through contemporary ideas on humanistic and holistic pedagogical approaches, on the one hand, and on the other, through recent theorization in cross-cultural pragmatics⁴ about power and authority in the classroom.

I suggest this theoretical framing only as a point of reference for considering the structuring of SELT and how our intentions often paralleled key premises of these two fields of study. It was our intent in SELT to support and provide a more dialogic learning atmosphere in order to focus on interpersonal, cultural, and linguistic connections. It was our intent to provoke and document the reciprocities and multiplicities of transculturation, to reveal the movement of intercultural contact whose flow is *always* multi-directional, but whose impetus can be obscured or seemingly reduced to unidirectional by the dominant voice and presence of the anthropologist, specialist, teacher, or so-called expert. The intent of SELT was also always to focus on the nature of *intent* itself, to juxtapose *intent* with *goal*, to self-

⁴ I am using Jenny Thomas' (1983, p. 91) definition of cross-cultural pragmatics. She has coined this term “as a shorthand way of describing not just native-non-native interactions, but

consciously allow freedom for development and mutation instead of purposefully channeling the current of classroom interaction into pre-established ends. In SELT it was key to remember every day that the only real goal was the *intent* to maintain a participatory and open-ended curriculum. In keeping with these guidelines, SELT evolved from a spontaneous, intuitive, hybrid methodology that was modified on a daily basis by a re-working, a re-defining, a re-assessing of its very being and practice.

2. The Implementation of SELT

From the onset SELT was formulated as a community-generated program based on cooperation between members of the Field School and the people of Pisté. Taking ideas of social-based language teaching models of canvassing the community to facilitate the self-determination of linguistic and educational needs (see Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997), the Field School set up a series of introductory interview sessions held in the center of town in which basic questions about the use and practice of English were presented to Pisteleños. These interview questions were formulated from Castañeda's assessment of previous discussions and concerns voiced to him by the Pisteleños. They dealt with where, when, and why Pisteleños heard, used, needed or wanted to use English, as well as their own estimation of their level. In order to triangulate Castañeda's previous ethnographic experience and what we learned from the interviews about functions, uses and attitudes regarding English, we later asked the adolescent and adult students to participate with the Field School members in role-playing situations. These role-play scenarios were suggested by the Pisteleño students themselves in response to the question "In what situation do you need to speak or understand English?" The students then prepared and acted the various role-playing improvisations that they had proposed and the Field School student teachers documented the class through video, photography, and note-taking.

any communication between two people who, in any particular domain, do not share a common linguistic or cultural background".

Some of the Field School members observed as ethnographers, others functioned as EFL teachers to record the language structures and vocabulary articulated by the students from Pisté. The role-playing by the Pisteños, or their language-theater, helped instructors to approximate their level of English and also to assess what their linguistic needs were in the international tourist environment of Pisté. During the session, students were told that in the role-playing of using English they could also use Spanish and/or Maya if needed in instances where they did not know the English. This was keeping with SELT's intent to emphasize the communicative validity of all three languages and to promote Maya as a viable and valuable form of communication even with non-Mayas.

The role-playing functioned as a proficiency exam, and for purposes of the program was much preferable to any written assessment. This was true with respect to both the ethnographical intents and the pedagogical outlook of SELT. First, this kind of acting out was preferable because the role-playing situations and dialogue were student-generated; second, because they provided both linguistic *and* pragmatic information⁵ about English use in Pisté; third because they allowed for language, body, and space to be considered within a communicative relationship; and fourth because they de-privileged the written text in a community where the level of literacy is quite variable. An important point in this exercise, keeping in mind the dual purpose and functioning of the Field School participants as both experimental ethnographers and EFL teachers, was not to fall into the "traditional" hierarchy of casting in the teacher-student authority scheme or into the expected "inflexible" roles of the observing anthropologist and the observed subject, which would negate the basic intentions of SELT. For that

⁵ The pragmatics of language use are especially important in establishing cross-cultural communication and relationships. When and how to use language, the interpretations of silence, register, tone, politeness are essential not only for linguistic effectiveness in the classroom, but also in terms of establishing an affective classroom environment that will foster positive attitudes about language learning. For an explanation of teacher/student dynamics in the L2 classroom see Torreblanca López (1998) and her discussion of issues of power, authority, courtesy and politeness in the classroom.

reason, members of the Field School also performed a role-playing situation where they represented a scene in which it was necessary for them to use the Maya language. This turning of the role-playing table inverted the teacher-student dynamics and the dimensions of the observed/observing relationship to provoke, from the beginning of the course, the realization that these roles of authority, power, and observation are not rigid, static, one-dimensional, or uni-directional. Additionally, it was a way of valuing the Maya language by putting the learning of English and the learning of Maya on the same level and equating their importance. And finally, the spectacle of the Field School members struggling with Maya added a relaxed tone and elements of humor and laughter that, from the outset, served to reduce imagined pre-established distances between student and teacher, and between Field School anthropologist and Pisteleño, to help create the kind of comfortable and safe atmosphere necessary for SELT's experimentation.

After all the data and information was reviewed, tentative class plans with regard to basic themes and topics were drafted.⁶ Four basic themes were set up in which to frame the children's classes: The Self and Family, The Classroom, Pisté, Tourism and Chichén Itzá. Adult classes centered around Pisté, the business of tourism, and Chichén Itzá. These topics seemed the most appropriate in accordance with the community's use of English and the Field School's desire to establish contexts of intercultural relationships, be they contexts that would include relating to members of the Field School or to tourists.⁷

⁶ Specific grammar structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation points for the different age groups and levels were determined later within the daily development of the course. However, for our adult students more specific linguistic needs were assessed from the role-play situations.

⁷ Our children's classes also benefited from the adults' language assessment. We took many of the basic linguistic points that were highlighted by the adults' role-playing and incorporated them at varying levels of syntactic and semantic complexity into the curriculum for the four sections of children's classes.

CLASSES: 7 sections	
130 Pisté Residents (Children and Adults)	
9 Field School Members	
Children and Teens	Monday-Thursday
Adults	Monday & Wednesday
<u>Beginning English</u>	<u>Intermediate English</u>
2 Sections Ages 8-10	1 Section Ages 11-13
1 Section Ages 11-13	1 Section Ages 14-16
1 Section Adults	1 Section Adults

Table 1. SELT Participants

2.1. Yucatec Maya and SELT

As an EFL classroom SELT intended to project an affective space in which to promote learning *and* in which to foster attitudes of mutual help and support that would allow for personal and collaborative creativity to flourish.⁸ One of the strategies to support this space of creative reciprocity was to greet students every day in Maya and to dismiss class with Maya. Therefore, classes were always framed by teachers speaking Maya and the

⁸ When I use ‘affect’ and ‘affective’ I am referring to moods, attitudes, and emotional aspects in general, ranging from fear, inhibition, resentment, curiosity, enthusiasm, excitement, etc. Whatever their “positive” or “negative” connotations, they impinge on all interpersonal relationships. Within the process of transculturation the affective is always present.

reminder that the teachers were also learners. These practices extended to greetings in Maya outside of the classroom as well, and were often prompted by the children who took the role of teachers as they corrected our answers in Maya. The process was also reversed when students greeted in English and teachers answered and then subsequently posed a question in Maya. However, any further substantive or lengthy conversation required switching to Spanish. In essence, all three languages were required to maintain that affective space outside of the classroom.

The inclusion of Maya on the part of the instructors was meant not only to blur the teacher-learner divisions, but also to connect on a more intimate level to the students for the majority of whom Maya was their first language.⁹ In terms of the L2 experience one might hypothesize that this social interaction between teacher and student would facilitate learner acculturation. Acculturation, the taking on of verbal and cultural behaviors of another language group and identifying oneself with that group, is a significant factor in second language learning (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p.21). The amount of social separation between language groups has been shown to affect the success of learning a foreign language and the level of acculturation (Young, 1999, p.19). Thus, by reducing the distance between English and Maya, making the English-Maya connection a direct one that is not always mediated by Spanish, SELT hoped to support learner acculturation. However, the process of acculturation in second language learning formed only a part of the more complex process of transculturation that the project attempted to document in the classroom.

The use of Maya in the L2 classroom also implied support of the maintenance of the indigenous language of Yucatan. In a limited way, this attempt to position Maya on an equal level to English and Spanish as a viable tool of communication and learning was meant to undermine the traditional subordination, in terms of status and power, of the Maya language. Despite the recent establishment of bilingual education in some

⁹ For information on the demographics of Yucatan's languages see (Briceño Chel, 2002; Pfeiler, 1999; Güémez Pineda, 2003).

areas of Yucatán, Yucatec Maya, in most cases, suffers from low prestige and may be seen as irrelevant for social advancement (Gabbert, 2004; Güémez Pineda, 2003; Pfeiler, 1999). However, in recent years several governmental and indigenous initiatives have taken root to revitalize the language and to create a new consciousness of pride in its use.¹⁰ The use of Maya to frame the English language classroom and as a communicative tool outside the class was in support of those initiatives on the one hand, and, on the other, it also functioned to connect the SELT teachers linguistically and socially with the students of Pisté.

Although the valuing of Maya culture and language while we were teaching English was an essential element of SELT's structure, the capacity to do so was restricted by a variety of factors. Time constraints, the lack of age-appropriate materials about Maya language and culture, the lack of Maya-English materials for children, and the instructors' own minimal knowledge of the Maya language proved limiting. To more optimally meet the project's objectives, information was needed about songs, games, and classroom activities familiar to Pisteleño children, materials in Maya that could be used as familiar cues to evoke English, and a study of pragmatics in the Maya language classroom that would help frame activities and exercises within a familiar pattern or register.

3. Classroom Collaborative Practices

In contrast to many EFL programs, SELT did not set up as primary goals the precise and accurate measuring of linguistic proficiency, achievement,

¹⁰ At this time state-supported bilingual education (Yucatec Maya-Spanish) takes place only at the primary level. There is also a limited program of Maya instruction to Spanish speakers in primary and secondary schools (see Subdirección de Educación Indígena, Yucatán: <http://www.educacion.yucatan.gob.mx/quienes/org/indigena.php>).

progression, or acquisition.¹¹ Rather, it concerned itself more with developing a learning space of mutual benefits in which the Maya students also worked as ethnographers, to evoke transculturation. At times, as part of the English lesson, the Maya students directed the Field School ethnographers as to what should be filmed or photographed. Other times they themselves did the videotaping and photographing of activities. Later speaking, writing, and listening exercises were set up so that students could review the class photos, in groups with each other or with their teachers. From the photos the students narrated and described activities, discussed their own, their classmates', and their teachers' participation, and made up stories about the class and learning English. They created their own individual and collective ethnographies of the class while practicing English. In terms of the L2 classroom, Reid (1999) suggests that “[a]sking students to evaluate their language learning experiences and to be accountable for their own learning increases their sense of freedom and responsibility” (305). Thus, in creating their own ethnographies of the classroom students discussed their learning experiences which formed the basis of the student-centered, active, and more egalitarian atmosphere SELT was trying to evoke. Additionally, the EFL students' accounts contributed to a multiply-voiced ethnographic documentation of the classes that went beyond the bipolar opposition of Field School *self* to Maya *other* that traditional ethnography would imply.

3.1. Collaborative Planning

In terms of teacher training, these EFL student-based ethnographies were most significant for the members of the Field School as strategies and practices for teaching were adapted on a daily basis according to the multiple observations of and from the day's classes. The daily dialogs in the post-class Field School sessions were open and varied, as class activities were

¹¹ Our intention was to re-do the same role-playing situations at the end of the course in order to make a provisional assessment of proficiency and/or achievement. However, time and

reviewed by the Field School members from at least two perspectives and two different disciplinary lenses, as each class had both a Field School student language instructor and a Field School student ethnographer. Each Field School student played both roles on a daily basis, as teacher in one class and ethnographer in another. Therefore, discussion stemmed from a variety of experiences and standpoints which included the feedback and observations of the Pisteño EFL students. The following day's activities were then collaboratively planned and practiced, based on the group's assessment of the day's experiences and in accordance with group consensus about the direction the project would take. From the Field School students' ideas and their own students' feedback we brainstormed, imagined, and intuitively determined the L2 methodologies that would be best suited for SELT as both an EFL and an experimental ethnography classroom. In essence, the class adapted daily to two different sets of disciplinary expectations as well as to the students' performances and expectations, in a process parallel to the transculturation that the project sought to provoke in the L2 classroom.

4. Mixing Disciplines and Theories

The construction of SELT L2 methodology was an application/conceptualization of transculturation in the most literal sense. SELT was never tied to one determining pedagogical or L2 theory. Quite blatantly it took intersecting points from multiple, and often contradictory, theories of language learning and set out from there. For example, the Natural Approach's underlying premise that the affective filter can function to lower inhibitions, spur motivation, and facilitate learning, or acquisition as Krashen would have it (Krashen & Terrel, 1983), is complementary to the setting up, as proposed by Suggestopedia, of a relaxed, comfortable environment where imagination and suggestion enhance learning (Lozanov, 1979). However, Krashen believes in both conscious and unconscious learning (or in his terms, the use of cognitive monitoring and unconscious

other constraints (illness of field school students) prevented us from doing so.

acquisition), while Suggestopedia discounts or diminishes the importance of cognitive-based language acquisition and posits that the most important L2 learning is unconscious (Krashen & Terrel, 1983; Lozanov, 1979). Although Krashen's and Lozanov's basic premises are contradictory, their differing assumptions intersect in the promoting of a stress-free, fun, supportive, egalitarian classroom or learning environment, which was one of the primary goals in SELT.

Another important premise in SELT was the intent to de-privilege the written text in order for a complete sensorial and physical model of communication to emerge. This led SELT to focus on the body and movement in the classroom. As a space for experimental ethnography, it was also the project's intent to use these ideas in the ethnographic documentation of SELT, to create visual and expositional documentation, to focus on the use of space, body language, gestures, movement, to place the documenters physically within the documentation and the documenting process, to document the multiple documentations taking place, to document the observed observing.

The emphasis on movement, body, and space in the EFL classroom as elements of focus in the practice of experimental ethnography was a catalyst for SELT to incorporate activities based on holistic kinds of language learning that use the whole body to stimulate memory, recognition, understanding, and learning. Taking ideas, strategies, and exercises from methodologies and theories as diverse as TPR (Total Physical Response) and NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), instructors coupled sounds and phrases to movements, jumped, skipped, clapped, sang songs, created dances, and emphasized these physical motions over written exercises for the learning and practice of English. The use of these kinds of activities, as concerns the EFL classroom, can be rationalized through theories like NLP that link brain activity to body movement so that physical activity is seen as

facilitating or accelerating the learning process.¹² The variety of physical activities included in SELT, along with movements associated with sounds, would also find their justification in NLP's theorization about the predominance of certain senses in differing learning styles. This kind of variety stimulates learning in many and more different ways to appeal to a wider spectrum of learners, be they primarily kinesthetic, visual, or auditory. It also helped SELT to create a more social and affective classroom atmosphere, leveling the power pyramid and highlighting the importance of relating to others, through the sharing of movement, sound, and rhythm, in the singing, dancing, and holding of hands in circle dances. Thus, the importance of the body, of touch, of feel, of space, and of movement for the evocation and documentation of transcultural creation were of equal importance as tools for facilitating learning, helping memory, and creating relationships in the EFL classroom.

In all aspects, as an EFL class and as teacher and ethnographer training school, in its conception and practice, SELT was always about looking at limits and boundaries and recognizing their artificiality and arbitrariness, crossing over, under, zigzagging through them, revealing their permeable and malleable nature. Through all levels of SELT, the complex and multiple ebb and flow of contact and influence between self and other were demonstrated, on the one hand, in the collaborative relationships between co-directors, between student teachers and supervisors, between language students and instructors, between the Field School and the community, and on the other, in the intersection of theories, the blending of disciplines, and the encounter of cultures.

¹² NLP theorizes the stimulation of different quadrants of the brain through specific movements of the body. According to NLP, by incorporating these movements into class plans and increasing the brain activity of the student, s/he should be more receptive to learning. (See Jensen, 1995; Revell & Norman, 1997).

5. Community Ethnography

These collaborations were what were demonstrated in the final sharing of SELT in Pisté, which was, in essence, a performance of these multiple connections. The *Clausura* (closing ceremony), in which students from Pisté received certificates of completion, was more than a symbolic graduation. It was a celebratory event of language, movement, exposition and community. A Maya *Hméen*, or shaman, performed a ritual blessing and cleansing to initiate the program that included food, music, and a demonstration of students singing songs in English, such as “Old Don Víctor had a Milpa” (to the tune of “Old MacDonald had a Farm”), “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes”, and the “The Hokey Pokey.” The learning of Maya was showcased when the SELT teacher-ethnographers sang and danced to the version of “The Hokey Pokey” that they had authored in Maya. The *Clausura* also presented a documentary exhibit of the English classes that included photographic essays by the ethnographer-SELT teachers and drawings made by the children that pertained to different lessons during the course. At the end of the evening the photographs on display of class activities, students, and teachers were all given to the students of Pisté. The *Clausura*, in its entirety, was video-documented by members of the Field School, and a copy was given to the community.

The *Clausura*, which celebrated SELT’s EFL program, created the same kind of transcultural collaborative community that SELT had sought to provoke in its classes. Student-ethnographers and teachers, and the children and families of Pisté all created, participated in, and reviewed the SELT “culture” in this “ethnographic installation” which, as an ethnographic document, reflected the underlying principles of SELT. Castañeda & Breglia (1998) stated that

[t]he standard product of ethnographic research, a book written in a foreign language and sold in inaccessible markets, has no immediate value for the participating members of the community. However, the memories and artifacts of the [*Clausura*] event, which in turn are evocations of a shared experience of close human engagement within a momentarily expanded

community of belonging form the real object and goal of ethnographic fieldwork and practice (p. 45).

6. Affect and Transculturation

Ethnography practiced in the way that the Field School theorized increases the affective and relational connections between self and other, or at least makes the dynamics of these connections more visible. In the same vein, in order to practice this kind of ethnography the existence of such affective junctures is presupposed. Perhaps this is why the EFL classroom seemed to be an ideal space for the documentation of transculturation. In terms of ethnography and language learning the importance for SELT of the affective component of the classroom cannot be over-emphasized. With respect to the teaching of English as a foreign language, most contemporary methodologies have recognized the significant way that affective factors condition learning (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Young, 1999). In fact, “[m]any of the major developments in language teaching during the past twenty-five years are in some way related to the need to acknowledge affect in language learning” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 7). As concerns the practice of experimental ethnography in the EFL classroom, consideration of affective dynamics is essential.

Arnold & Brown (1999) tell us that “[l]anguage learning and use is a transactional process. Transaction is the act of reaching out beyond the self to others and, as such, it is intimately connected with the learner’s emotional being” (23). I would add that the instructor/ethnographer’s emotional being is also as intimately connected to the teaching/learning process, so that this extension of self to other is always already conditioned by affective issues and, in turn, conditions the learning atmosphere or the ethnographic experience. It also lays the foundation in which transculturation evolves. As a concept, transculturation was perhaps first coined to provide a way to examine the more complicated cultural blendings that acculturation could not address (Ortiz, 1995). While applied linguistics speaks of acculturation as a significant factor in language learning, transculturation is what took

SELT a step farther to look at the more complex processes and connections in the L2 classroom and beyond just focusing on the learner's integration of another language group's behaviors. It also sought to document teacher adaptations within the context of a transcultural classroom. Transculturation was SELT's conceptual tool to engage the contact zone of blended disciplines, mixed methodologies, and shifting classroom roles. Through the lens of transculturation, SELT attempted to render more visible those bi-directional transactional processes that evoked hybrid, evolving, multiple selves in both learners and teachers. Instead of focusing on the *goals* of acculturation, it documented the transcultural *dynamics* of power, social relations, and interactions, in the cross-cultural community of the L2 classroom. These transcultural dynamics cross into several fields of L2 research and underlie much of what applied linguists are discussing in terms of affect and attitudes towards language learning. Although not labeled as such, I would argue that transcultural processes form the basis of much research on learner-teacher interactions. In a recent article Kondo-Brown (2004, p. 612) found that “[o]ral performance outcomes [...] are products of two-way work between the interviewer and the child candidate”. She suggests that “the social aspect of interaction needs to be much more seriously considered in future L2 assessment research” (2004, p. 603). In essence, Kondo-Brown is discussing the kind of transcultural processes that experimental ethnography is concerned with and that SELT was based on. Key for considering such processes is how students' cultural and emotional well being and their progress in the L2 classroom will be affected by transculturation (both their acculturation to the L2 culture and their instructor's reverse acculturation). Ultimately, any assessment of how transculturation influences attitudes, moods, interpersonal relationships, and learning would help to create a more comprehensive view of the dynamics of affect in the classroom.

7. Final Considerations

In attempting to evoke transculturation, SELT was set up as a participatory, student-centered locus and practice where the importance of affect was

always central to the consideration of methodologies, to the project's unorthodox notion of effectiveness in the L2 classroom, and to the practice of ethnography. However, while Field School written and video ethnographies, the *Clausura* ethnographic installation, and the subsequent Field School monograph (Castañeda & Breglia, 1998) documented for the participants the changing, collaborative, and shared social and linguistic roles of students and teachers as a process of transculturation, the results of how transculturation affected L2 learning were never directly measured. Therefore, this review of SELT does not pretend to serve as a source of data, but rather as a point of departure to reflect on transculturation and the L2 classroom. Such reflections generate both topics of concern specific to SELT, as well as general questions about how the concept of transculturation might reframe current L2 research.

On the most basic level, an analysis of SELT as a locus of transculturation begs a two-part question: first, whether the L2 instructor's "acculturation" to the students' linguistic and group identity affects students' rate and degree of "acculturation" to the L2 culture; and second, what are the consequences of this dual movement for L2 learning? Would greater instructor change or movement towards breaching social separation between cultural groups hinder or facilitate L2 learning? What hybrid culture, or interculture, is created by this dual process, or transculturation, in the classroom? What relationship would this blended culture have with student learning and achievement? Would it influence language use outside of the classroom? What elements of cultural practice are discarded and which are added in this interculture? Do these new hybrid cultural practices carry over outside the classroom?

SELT would have had to address these kinds of questions had its focus on transculturation been evaluated within the parameters of applied linguistics research. In this regard, a more comprehensive series of questions about attitudes towards English, Yucatec Maya, and Spanish would have been necessary in the canvassing of the community before starting the project, and then again at its completion. Answers to these same series of questions would also have been required from the instructors. In addition to

language issues, the survey instrument would have needed to focus on the cultural and social constructions of “student” and “teacher” for both the Pisteleños and the field school students. Would viewing the English teacher as a student of Maya support Maya students learning English or not? In other words, in the transcultural space in which teachers and students flow into both roles is student L2 learning facilitated? An assessment of the notions, expectations, and attitudes about the roles of teachers and students in terms of authority, power, control, value, respect, gender, age, race, collaboration, and cooperation would need to be made from both groups at the beginning and the end of the project as well as an assessment of class behavior.

Further attention to specific classroom exercises of SELT could evaluate if and how certain practices influenced specific attitudes and expectations about student-teacher relationships and affected L2 learning. For example, in exercises such as group singing, dancing, and playing that SELT believed would diminish physical space between class members, was there an equivalent and measurable diminishing of social space and did it reinforce or weaken the affective environment? Further examination of teacher adaptation in the classroom might have addressed whether teachers’ greater knowledge of and proximity to the academic practices common to the students’ cultural context encouraged or impeded L2 learning.

In promoting instructors’ adaptation to student cultural identity SELT used the EFL classroom as a space to value the Maya language and assumed that the interculture produced by transculturation would positively affect student and teacher attitudes about the use and social functions of Yucatec Maya. That hypothesis was never supported through data other than that of the anecdotal and experiential ethnographies of the program, but it merits further consideration. In a program like SELT, would EFL-instructor attitudes about Yucatec Maya have any correlation to student attitudes and uses of Maya? How would student and instructor attitudes change during the course of the program? If community attitudes towards Maya were seen as more negative than those of the instructors, how would this be accommodated in the interculture? Could a positive attitude towards English be linked to a more positive attitude towards Maya and vice versa? How

would greater mutual use of Yucatec Maya by instructors and students affect the learning of English? Would learning English in a community where English is an important economic tool reduce the frequency of Maya usage despite positive attitudes in the classroom? Would a growing Maya-English classroom interculture affect attitudes towards use of Spanish outside the home?

SELT hypothesized that its attention to affect, to diminishing the social spaces between the language cultures, and to using Yucatec Maya as a communicative tool would facilitate the learning of English, value the Maya language, and create a greater empathy and understanding between the Field School and the Pisteños. Although supporting evidence was not based on empirical data or assessment of language achievement, the student ethnographies that documented growth and change and the collaborative, multi-lingual, celebratory tone of the ethnographic installation, or *Clausura*, indicated a shared learning and communicative success to the community and Field School participants alike.

As a hybrid ethnographic-applied linguistic construct, SELT may not have fulfilled either discipline's expectations for results or data. That is the consequence of its own hybridity. Nevertheless, it may suggest possibilities for future linguistic, pragmatic, affective, methodological, and ethnographic considerations for the L2 classroom. SELT offered an example of how the L2 classroom can work to acknowledge cultural differences and support the maintenance of indigenous languages. And perhaps, most importantly, it provided a model of transculturation as a transdisciplinary concept that might more easily engage the socio-linguistic complexities and the opposing cultural tendencies of differentiation and homogenization within an ever-more globalized world.

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