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An investigation into the impact of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) on students' learning and the teacher's practice in an adult English Second Language (ESL) presentation skills classroom

Ponnen, Michelle

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Abstract

This study seeks to contribute to the field of second language instruction by investigating the impact of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) on students' learning and the teacher in an adult English second language Presentation Skills classroom. The study aimed to discover the impact of CSP strategies on adult ESL students' learning of Presentation Skills, the affordances and limitations of CSP strategies for adult ESL students' learning of Presentation Skills as well as to ascertain the teacher's reflections about the effectiveness of the Presentation Skills course with the use of CSP strategies.

The study was conducted at a language school in Johannesburg with seven second language learners who were enrolled for a ten week English short course on Presentation Skills. They came from a wide range of linguistic, cultural, economic and social backgrounds and were between the ages of 29 to 60 years old. Data was collected using a questionnaire, a teacher's journal and the students' reflective paragraphs.

The findings indicated that CSP strategies increased the effectiveness of the Presentation Skills course as it facilitated getting to know the students better, the creation of a humanizing class environment, foregrounded the importance of critical teacher reflection and the development of a third space. Another key finding was the three affordances of CSP strategies for adult ESL students' learning of Presentation

Skills, which were grouped under the following three themes: the emergence of discourses of diversity, tolerance and respect; an awareness of cultural identity and the creation of a learning community. In contrast, there was one limitation of CSP strategies for adult ESL students' learning of Presentation Skill, a perceived weak cultural identity. Students indicated that they did not have a strong cultural background or identity and demonstrated a superficial understanding of culture, which resulted in surface level engagement. Furthermore, it was evident that the impact of CSP strategies in a Presentation Skills course was overwhelming positive as they positioned learners as a source of knowledge and skill and encouraged understanding of other cultures and people.

This research is of particular importance to language instructors, teacher trainers, curriculum developers and adult ESL learners as it highlights the importance of including the cultures of students in order to create an equitable learning environment that validates the experiences, identities and languages of learners which ultimately positively impacts the efficiency of learning and teaching. It would also allow teachers to be better prepared for the multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic reality of classrooms.