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## MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS OF IMPROVING STUDENTS' DISCOURSE (WRITTEN) COMPETENCIES

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### ANNOTATION

There are a number of ways to improve students' written discourse competences during their learning and research period. It is clear that a large number of students face certain issues, as written academic discourse is unfamiliar to many. What does it mean, and why is it important? As a general principle, individuals who use a language must communicate not only orally but also in written contexts. Indeed, these constructions should be built on solid, rigorous foundations. However, learning or studying students' needs won't be enough without an awareness of multicultural aspects. Initially, it would be necessary to understand the concept of 'multicultural,' which pertains to various cultural varieties or elements that manifest in a multicultural society. Education plays a crucial role in these findings, and in this perspective, the cultural dimension becomes the most significant aspect of acquiring any language. To achieve the desired result of learning a target language, the form of writing will certainly be a priority. Discourse inherently encapsulates culture; language cannot exist independently of culture. The objective of this research is to enhance students' written discourse in a straightforward manner. The study will draw upon observed experiences and methodologies employed during the instruction of learners with mixed proficiency levels. Various approaches, including essay writing, technology utilization, and interviews, were implemented with university students to highlight the need for individualized instruction. This scientific endeavor will undoubtedly influence written discourse competence, while also considering visual outcomes.

**Key words:** Discourse competence, writing skills, multicultural aspects, modern methods, approaches of discourse (written) competencies, the usage of technologies, problems in writing, the methodology of writing.

### INTRODUCTION

Discourse is an elusive term within the realm of humanities, encompassing subject matters that directly or indirectly delve into the examination of language functionality. Semiotics, literary criticism, linguistics, ethnology, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy all engage with this multifaceted concept. A definitive, universally accepted definition of "discourse" that encompasses all its applications is lacking, which perhaps accounts for its widespread popularity in recent decades. Diverse interpretations, intertwined by intricate relationships, effectively meet various conceptual requirements, thereby reshaping conventional notions of dialogue, speech, style, text, and even language. In 1999, a compilation of scholarly works devoted to the French school of discourse analysis was released. Within the introductory article of this publication, P. Serio enumerates eight distinct interpretations of the term. Furthermore, the primary accentuation of this term remains unsettled - although the prevalent stress falls on the second syllable, stress on the first syllable is not uncommon either. Three principal categories emerge when classifying the



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usage of the term "discourse," allowing for a clear differentiation that aligns with national traditions and the contributions of individual authors.

The first category encompasses the direct linguistic applications of the discourse term. Historically, the term's initial usage can be traced back to an article titled "Discourse Analysis" by the American linguist Z. Harris, published in 1952. However, it took approximately two decades for the comprehensive term "discourse" to gain prominence in the field of linguistics. The linguistic applications themselves display considerable diversity, yet, on the whole, they aim to develop and refine conventional concepts of text, speech, and dialogue. Three primary discourse types emerge: oral, written, and mental. The most crucial distinction within the discourse classification lies in the dichotomy between written and oral discourse. This distinction primarily pertains to the transmission channel: visual for written discourse and acoustic for oral discourse. Occasionally, the disparity between written and oral forms of language use is erroneously equated with the distinction between text and discourse, although such confusion lacks justification.

Research review on learning the construction of multicultural competence by teachers during teaching effected by an approach of professionalization (Le Boterf, 2002 and 2004), it the construction of multicultural competence, as perceived by teachers during teaching placements. The concept of discourse competence and learning theory "Experiential" (Kolb, 1984) underlies this qualitative research. One emerged model of intervention during teaching students is likely to contribute to the construction of the multicultural aspects of future teachers. In a learning paradigm centred on the learner (Astolfi, 2003), the educational intervention should take into account the individual characteristics of learners, such as age, gender, culture, personality, type of intelligence. As a constituent element of the personality, culture, in its sense of "system of symbols, traditions, norms and institutions", is one of the individual differences (Royce and Powell, 1983, 62, translation). Several studies have pointed out that culture determines how we learn (Kennedy, 2002; Ramburuth and McCormick, 2001). Education policy makers have included it as a differentiating factor between students, among the aspects to be considered when practicing the teaching profession (Ministèredel'Éducation du Québec, 2001; Ontario College of Teachers, 1999). Viewed from a perspective of social criticism, the treatment of ethnocultural differences in the education system is at the heart of research in multicultural education. Tinged of inherent ideological biases and social demands, the problem of discourse competence reveals its significance in the context of the increasing diversification of the Contemporary Canadian Society (Statistics Canada, 2003). Research in multicultural education has examined, among other things, how future teachers are prepared to work in multi-ethnic environments. The legitimacy of this training, the contents of the learning and their stability, the pedagogical methods used, the curricular analysis of programs representations of key stakeholders on ethnocultural diversity, and their impact on teaching and learning are topics of interest. Yet few studies deal with the contribution of professional teaching to the multicultural training of future teachers. Sometimes evaluative, when they aim to report on the level of satisfaction of related trainees with their learning. Sometimes exploratory, when looking at learning pathways (Moldoveanu, 2006) or conceptions of the multicultural skills of trainees (Mukamurera, Lacourse and Lambert, 2006), research on multicultural training in teaching internships most often adopt a self-perception approach through cases as a discourse competence. These studies highlight that improving discourse (written) competence in multi-ethnic environments lead to an awareness of future teachers to the differences and the means that a teacher could deploy to adapt his/her educational



approach to the diversity of his/her class group (Cook and Van Cleaf, 2000; Duarte and Reed, 2004;).

Through this study, our primary objective is to examine and formalize the process of cultivating multicultural aspects within the discourse competence of aspiring teachers during teaching internships, while also analysing the influencing factors. How do student-teachers perceive their pedagogical journey in relation to multicultural differences? What factors contribute to the development of multicultural competence among future teachers during teaching placements? Furthermore, what learning models do prospective educators prefer? These pivotal inquiries will be addressed in this article, following a structured approach consisting of four key steps. Firstly, we will elucidate the underlying theoretical framework. Secondly, we will outline the research methodology employed.

The presentation of the results and their interpretation in the context of the chosen theoretical framework will be succeeded by conclusive findings that will also propose potential avenues for future research. This research was conducted in Uzbekistan. The program undertaken by the participants spans a duration of four academic years. To qualify, candidates must possess an undergraduate degree. Structured across two terms, the program entails theoretical courses on learning, the education system, and subject-specific didactics, offered over two terms, as well as two teaching placements lasting four weeks each (in the fall and spring). These placements are conducted under the guidance of an associate teacher and an internship supervisor affiliated with the faculty of education.

This study is rooted in two fundamental concepts: student discourse competence and the development of professional competence. Each of these concepts will be expounded upon in the subsequent sections. Specifically, we will focus on the multicultural aspects of enhancing students' discourse competence. Our research aligns with a perspective that emphasizes students' writing abilities, which are governed by the notion of professional competence (Paranoid, 2004; Jonnaert, 2002; Mellouki and Gauthier, 2005). The available resources axis pertains to both the personal resources of the professional (such as skills, qualifications, and knowledge) and the environmental resources. Additionally, the axis of reflection exhibit introduces the necessary reflective distance for professional tutors to comprehend the reasons and methods behind their actions, allowing them to self-regulate their responses in unforeseen situations. It is worth noting that existing research rarely addresses all the aforementioned aspects when it comes to tackling the multicultural dimensions of students' discourse competence.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Written discourse, despite having held significant prestige for countless centuries, is inherently derived from oral discourse. Presently, the majority of languages exist primarily in oral form. Nonetheless, a thorough comparison of written and oral discourse as alternative forms of linguistic expression only commenced in the 1970s. The distinction in transmission channels carries crucial implications for the processes involved in written and oral discourse. In oral discourse, comprehension and generation occur synchronously, whereas in written discourse, they do not. Fragmentation, wherein speech is divided into intonational units separated by pauses, is observed in oral discourse. Conversely, written discourse integrates into sentences and other syntactic structures. Notably, written discourse lacks the spatial and temporal proximity between the speaker and the addressee found in oral discourse. In written discourse, both the addressee and the speaker are detached from the information being described. An individual has the ability to employ language without generating any visible or audible manifestations of linguistic activity. In



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such instances, we refer to this phenomenon as mental discourse. Language employed in mental discourse retains its communicative nature, yet the same individual functions as both the speaker and the addressee. Despite its significance, mental discourse remains insufficiently explored due to the absence of readily observable manifestations. It is also commonly referred to as inner speech. Notably, Vygotsky's study stands as the most renowned investigation into the realm of mental discourse. Are you in need of additional materials related to the topic of this article? Utilize our new search function to discover more articles. Written speech, as a means of expressing literary language, holds a significant role in speech communication and is present across various functional styles, albeit to varying extents. In the realm of business style, a written form of representation is essential, driven by the style's characteristic traits of precision, which disallows for ambiguity, and the standardization of thought expression. The written form primarily prevails and is highly favoured within the scientific style. This preference is attributed to the style's dominant feature of conceptual accuracy, demanding the meticulous documentation of scientific knowledge and the imperative of preserving and transmitting it to future generations. The journalistic style allows the existence within its framework of texts that have both written and oral forms of expression. The "written" sphere of journalism, actively explored today by linguists, includes newspaper, magazine, advertising and PR texts. The basis for artistic style texts is also the written form of presentation. This study followed the data collection and analysis methodology proposed by me. About 20 students participated in my experimental work in Samarkand and Bukhara universities. Students have agreed to participate in my research, on a voluntary basis: Shakhlo (female, in her nineteen's, Samarkand, elementary level of education); Zubayda (female, in her twenties, Bukhara region, elementary level of education); .... Etc. Each participant has followed two writing placements in Uzbekistan schools. In order to preserve the anonymity of participants, all the names used are fictitious. Each respondent participated in two semi-structured interviews, spread over the two internships of learning. The first interview took place before the start of the first internship and aimed to explore the personal experience of the participants in relation to multi-ethnicity (friends, work, travel), formal training received in connection with multicultural education, views about importance and the definition of multicultural education and the multicultural competence of the teacher, role of the teacher in a multi-ethnic environment and in an environment perceived as homogeneous, expectations of multiculturalism training during teaching placements. The last interview (exam), organized after the end of the teacher education programme, targeted education-related concepts multicultural and multicultural aspects of discourse competence as well as the assessment of learning carried out during the internships and the ways in which each one has carried out these learnings. Two more interviews were carried out during the two teaching courses, during which the participants were invited to describe their experiences with discourse competence related to multicultural education (situations perceived as (means, interventions of associate teachers or supervisors of internships)).

As a preliminary step, each case was meticulously analysed, followed by a comparative analysis based on the derived categories. The content analysis method, utilizing a mixed reading and writing grid, was employed for the examination of each case. Individual portraits were crafted and subsequently shared with the participants for validation purposes. Without providing an exhaustive account of all the findings, this text specifically delves into the methodologies employed by the participants to develop their multicultural dimensions of discourse competence during their teaching courses. The subsequent section will present the results and offer interpretations grounded in the underlying terms of reference.



## DISCUSSION

Perceived discourse competence in learning appears to exert a substantial influence on the multicultural dimensions of competence, particularly with regard to personal resources and reflective capacities. Conversely, the dimension associated with practical skills is perceived as inadequately developed due to the professionalizing training, while the dimension pertaining to environmental resources is largely absent.

Only one participant [Zubayda] said that the learning placements did not contribute to the development of its critical examination capabilities. The others believe that the experiences of written discourses have sensitized, to varying degrees, the existence of prejudices in the high school environment and their own limitations and apprehensions, to the need to refocus to meet the needs of students and immigrants in turn to the training needs of teachers: "I have seen this in some schools: some teachers think that if a student has problems, it is because he is a stranger. We catalogue it right away we do not have the patience to know it and especially, to bring it to learn. If the teacher has prejudices, he will create barriers. What can he do in a classroom whose children he thinks suck? If we catalogue like that, it's because we don't do the efforts to get our students to learn. (Another teacher). Dilnoza admits her limitations, discovered during teaching internships: "Multi-ethnicity is a great challenge. I have to recondition myself. I was surprised to find that I had some apprehensions, for example, when I had a student. Muslim, I was less inclined to talk to him". These results are also consistent with the findings of empirical research on teaching placements. Indeed, the learnings mentioned by the participants in our study have relates mainly to personal resources (attitudes, knowledge and reflection) and less to know how to act. From another perspective, and without worrying about cultural differences, Boudreau [2001] undertook a case study that illustrates how it is possible for an intern to develop the ability to adapt one's teaching approach to the characteristics of class groups supported. At the same time to improve students' discourse competence within multicultural aspects. The indices used by the researcher to support these displays are capacity, "differentiate between a teaching routine and student learning" and skill to "seek the youth" [Boudreau, 2001, p. 79]. These two skills refer to the principles of differentiated pedagogy, in which we have inscribed multicultural education. It follows that internship learning in connection with the differentiation of the educational approach can be realized under certain favourable conditions, including the type of support provided by teachers associates and personal characteristics of the intern. Thus, the accompaniment of which the trainee at the Boudreau's centre of etude [2001] benefited during his internship and focused on the development of the said skills. On the contrary, Gervais and Desrosiers [2005] do not deal in depth with either the characteristics personal of the participants, nor of the accompanying approach of the associate teachers in connection with the competence to adapt the intervention to the characteristics of the students. In order to corroborate these remarks on the type of support received during the internship and experiment, the next subsection will deal with the context specific learning to each of the participants.

In our view, the fact that most trainees report "awareness" or "taking awareness" about know-how, not concrete learning. Josie remains the only participant who spoke about the "coaching" of the associate teacher during her first internship in a multi-ethnic environment. The trainee perceived more rigor in the formative intervention provided during the experiment in question. The perception of his internship learning makes it moreover proof, Josie being also the only one to have directly linked the supervision of the teacher associate and internship apprentice ship, i.e. the training of work teams. Interaction with parents and exchanges with other teachers working in the



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trainee's host school are also among the factors of influence. In the Sherzod's case, the interaction with the parents seems to have fuelled his reflection around some cultural content, without, however, significantly influencing its learning. Alisher, in on the other hand, drew profit, from the pedagogical point of view, from his interactions with the parents, and tried to conceptualize his observations. For her part, Zubayda highlighted the contribution that others have made.

Members of the high school team could have to train trainees. Several external conditions have not significantly influenced the learning of students and Interns. These are the supervision of the internship supervisor, the subject taught and the level of teaching, factors that were not mentioned by the student-masters followed. Supervisors of internships were perceived as "arbitrators" or "administrators" whose role was limited to doing the administrative link between the university and the internship environment and to intervene to resolve any difficult situations. No internship supervisor appears to have contributed to the construction of the multicultural competence of the participants in our research. This conclusion supports the fact that aspects related to multicultural competence were not taken into account in evaluation. The subject matter taught and the level of education, although the participants did not mention them among the factors which influenced the construction of their multicultural competence, acted in several cases as reflection triggers. For example, Sherzod reflected on the choice of texts Noam wondered about the exploitation of works of art for doing multicultural education, while Alisher has profit of his course hospitality and tourism to introduce students to certain cultural aspects.

After examining how the different factors intervene throughout the process of construction of multicultural competence, it is timely to examine the process itself. It's precisely the objective of the next section. The construction of multicultural competence during vocational training, an unfinished experiential learning journey? Recall that, according to Kolb (1984), learning is done in four stages, namely:

- (a) Experience concrete;
- (b) The reflected observation;
- (c) Abstract conceptualization and
- (d) Active experimentation.

All participants, with the exception of Shakhlo, had the chance to do at least one internship teaching in a multi-ethnic environment. Teaching multi-ethnic classroom groups would be concrete experience, in the words of Kolb (1984). In addition, all participants displayed have reflected on the experiences acted during the experiment. Two interns confessed that participation in the research triggered and guided their reflection. The fact that the intervention of associate teachers and internship supervisors who accompanied the student-masters did not touch that very rarely to aspects related to multicultural education encourages us to believe that this is also the case for the other participants, although they were not aware of it.

The reflected observation therefore remained at the discretion of the trainees, not stimulated or oriented by the speakers who are supposed to guide them in their learning. Non-systematic supervision in connection with multicultural education conveys representation multicultural education as a secondary aspect. However, a dissonance appears between the representations of the participants in the subject of multicultural education and this representation implicitly conveyed in environments where the nine student-teachers have completed their practical training. At the end of their internship experiences, participants rejected this representation of multicultural education as problematic marginal for education. They all expressed the opinion that, on the contrary, education multicultural should be of greater concern to education stakeholders. This



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allows us to conclude that abstract conceptualization was also carried out at the discretion of the trainees, and that sometimes the results of the conceptualization process go against the representations conveyed by the speakers. Finally, few participants claimed to have had the chance to learn or to put to the work of the know-how during the two courses. We can therefore draw the conclusion.

## **RESULTS**

The stage of active experimentation is conspicuously absent in the training of students concerning multicultural competence. Adopting an experiential learning perspective provides further insights into the process of developing multicultural competence among the nine participants in our research. Firstly, this interpretation elucidates the types of learning perceived as achieved by the student-teachers. Most participants noted learning related to attitudes, critical examination skills, and theoretical knowledge (particularly cultural practices). These achievements appear to stem from abstract conceptualization, a step undertaken by trainees even in the absence of guidance from associate teachers. Engaging in research seems to have contributed to these learnings, as participants willingly engaged in observation and reflection guided by interview questions. Conversely, acquiring practical know-how necessitated active experimentation in the classroom. Given that multicultural education was rarely addressed during the majority of internships, it is unsurprising that trainees were unable to embark on this stage.

A second point concerns the paradoxical disparity between the representation of multicultural education as a peripheral aspect in internship settings, as perceived by the participants, and the trainees' own beliefs, where they affirmed the importance and relevance of multicultural education upon completing their training. We attribute this situation to the lack of guidance during the stages of observation, reflection, and abstract conceptualization. Left to their own devices, trainees interpreted situations that caught their attention based on their individual conceptions, resulting in coherent representations aligned with their preconceived notions. While the training received for constructing multicultural competence can be viewed as an incomplete experiential learning journey, we shall explore in the following section which model of professional training would best benefit the participants in this research.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to formalize the process of constructing multicultural aspects of discourse competence as perceived by student-masters during their study period. The analysis of results identified the achieved learnings and the influencing factors. From the perspective of experiential learning, the journeys of the nine participants are found to be incomplete, primarily due to the lack of a specific framework. This research has led to the emergence of a model of supervision during teaching courses inspired by the theory of experiential learning. According to the participants, these suggestions would contribute to the development of multicultural competence among future teachers, a professional dimension considered highly significant in the current global context.

Given the limited number of participants and the exclusive focus on the perspective of student-masters, this study does not claim the generalization of its conclusions. Future descriptive research with a larger number of participants and the inclusion of relevant categories could provide further insights into the proposed model for constructing multicultural competence. It is also crucial to consider the perceptions of associate teachers and practicum supervisors. In an action research approach, the proposed model of trainee supervision could be tested in teaching settings to assess its applicability beyond multicultural competence, as well as its impact on written competence as an indicator of multicultural relations.



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